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MORNINGS AMONG THE JESUITS

AT ROME.

Being Notes of Conversations held with certain Jesuits on the Subject of Religion in the City of Rome.

BY THE

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Mornings among the Jesuits at Rome.

INTRODUCTION.

In committing the following pages to the press, it is felt that some few words of introduction are required, to account for their origin and to explain their nature.

Having visited Rome, not only to gratify and indulge my taste for the arts among the most exquisite sculptures and the most beautiful pictures, the greatest miracles of art in the world—having visited that city not only that I might look at the ruins—the glorious ruins, of the temples, and baths, and palaces of the conquerors of the world, and to wander among those scenes where lived and walked the heroes of the past, but also and chiefly that I might see and study the true genius of the Church of Rome, and judge for myself as to her nature and character, I felt it to be my duty to avail myself of every means in my power to obtain information on the subject.

Two sources of information immediately presented themselves. One was derived from my own means and opportunities for personal observation: I therefore carefully attended all the various services of the Church; was a watchful observer at every procession; attended every exhibition of relics; was at every

church on all unusual ceremonials; attended every place at which the pope or the cardinals were expected; took my place at every ordination, at every funeral of cardinals or bishops, at every reception into a nunnery, at the celebration of every festival—in short, at every thing that could give opportunity for judging of the true nature and character of the system, as exhibited in its outward manifestation of services, ceremonials, and festivals; and I am bound to acknowledge the debt of gratitude which I owe to some members of the Society of Jesuits, and to some lay gentlemen of Rome, for the extreme kindness and courtesy with which they facilitated the prosecution of my object, securing to me access to places where otherwise I could not have been admitted. The results of my observations thus made have already been published in my account of "A PILGRIMAGE TO ROME." The second source of information was not so dependent upon myself, but was opened to me by circumstances as unexpected as they were gratifying. I allude to the opportunity of close intercourse with the members of the priesthood, by which I might learn their opinions and feelings, and receive their explanations of all that was passing around me. It arose from the following circumstance. During my constant attendance at all the services of the Church of Rome, I was observed by a Roman gentleman who held office in the papal court; and, being acquainted with him, he remarked one day to my wife that I seemed much interested in these things, and asked whether I would not like to make the acquaintance of some of the clergy. Having learned from her my wishes to that effect, he called some

days after to say he had been with his personal friend the Padre-Generale—the Father-General of the Jesuits, and had mentioned to him my wish to enter into communication with the clergy, and he seemed to intimate that this was sure to convert me to the Church of Rome. He added that the father-general had directed two members of the order to wait on me, to give me any information which I might desire. These gentlemen came in due course. They soon presented me to others. They introduced me to the professors of their establishment, the Collegio Romano, and thus a series of conversations or conferences on the subject of the points at issue between the Churches of England and Rome commenced and were carried on, as occasion offered, during the whole period of my residence at Rome. A portion of my notes of these conversations constitutes this present volume of "MORNINGS AMONG THE JESUITS AT ROME."

I dealt with all frankness with these several gentlemen as to the object of their visit. They were under the impression, which they were at no pains to conceal, that I was disposed favorably toward their Church; that I was one of those Anglican clergymen who neither understand nor love the Church of England, and who, in a restless dissatisfaction and love of change, are prepared to abandon her communion for that of Rome, and who only wait a little encouragement, and perhaps instruction, before taking the last step. I was very careful to undeceive them, stating that I should be most happy to confer with them on the differences between the two churches, but that I could not do so under a false color; that I was devotedly

attached in judgment and in feeling to the Church of England; that I looked on her as the Church of God in England, and the most pure, most apostolic, most scriptural of all the churches of Christendom; that, without unchurching other churches, she was still the church of my judgment and of my affections; and that I had never for a moment harbored the thought of abandoning her for any other church, and especially for the Church of Rome.

My new friends, for such their subsequent conduct proved them to be, seemed surprised at the decision of my opinions, and expressed their wonder that I could refuse to hold communion with the Church of Rome.

I stated that I felt very strong objections, as they appeared to me, against that Church; but that, if those objections were removed—if they, who were priests of the Church of Rome, could remove them—if they, living at the fountain-head of that Church, could prove them futile, in that case they should find me free to act, and prepared to act on my enlightened convictions, and I would, without hesitation, join their communion.

They generally asked me to state my objections, as they felt assured that they would be able to remove them.

This invitation led to a series of conferences or conversations with some of these gentlemen. We ranged through a very large portion of the entire field of controversy between the Churches of England and Rome, and much was elicited that was perfectly new to me—new, chiefly as indicative of the opinions and feelings of the enlightened and learned members of the

priesthood; and I was sometimes startled at the opinions expressed and the feelings avowed, as exhibiting a phase of mind and feeling which has heretofore seemed to me incompatible with enlightenment and education. I have learned, and must bear about me forever the memory of the lesson, never again to regard the extremities of credulity as inconsistent with the most scientific attainments, or to suppose that what seems the most absurd and marvelous superstition is incompatible with the highest education, or to think that the utmost prostration of the mind is inconsistent with the loftiest range of intellectual power. There was in some of my friends an extraordinary amount of scientific attainments, of classical erudition, of polite literature, and of great intellectual acumen; but all seemed subdued and held, as by an adamantine grasp, in everlasting subjection to what seemed to them to be the religious principle. This principle, which regarded the voice of the Church of Rome as the voice of God himself, was ever uppermost in the mind, and held such an influence and a mastery over the whole intellectual powers, over the whole rational being, that it bowed in the humility of a child before every thing that came with even the apparent authority of the Church. I never could have believed the extent of this, if I had not witnessed it in these remarkable instances. They seemed to regard the canons of the Church precisely as we regard the decisions of Scripture; and just as we regard any unbelief of the statements of Holy Scripture as infidelity, so they regard every doubt as to the judgment of the Church as the worst infidelity. It seemed

as if a doubt of it never cast its shadow across their minds.

But my friends argued in these conferences at a considerable disadvantage. They imagined that I was unacquainted with the controversy between the churches; that I was disposed in my principles and views to join the Church of Rome; that I was already convinced that I ought to join her communion; and that my objections were only a sort of make-believe. They imagined that I entered on these conferences in an easy, free, unprepared state, and without any view to controversy; and they therefore were induced to express themselves more freely and openly, less guardedly than perhaps they otherwise would have done. This placed them in some respects at a disadvantage, which I am bound in candor to acknowledge, and one that was particularly serviceable to me, as calculated to secure to me the more free expression of their real sentiments and feelings. But, at the same time, it was not without its disadvantages to myself. I dared not distinctly assume the position of a Protestant controversialist, as it would, in the first place, have led to their immediate withdrawal from all communication with me, and in the next place, in case I exhibited any thing like a proselyting spirit, there was every probability my passports would be sent to me, with orders from the police to withdraw from Rome. This necessitated great caution on my part, and obliged me to hold back many things that I might otherwise have urged, and in all faithfulness should have urged; and it obliged me to confine myself to one object, namely, the obtaining information as to the sen-

timents and feelings of the priests at Rome. If I could draw them out; if I could elicit their real mind; if I could ascertain the real nature of their religion, and their mode of argument as developed in free and familiar conversation; if I could occasionally advance an objection that might awaken a doubt, or suggest a new train of thought in their minds which might ultimately lead to better things, then I should have obtained all I could under the circumstances reasonably hope or expect to obtain. And thus we all labored, both they and myself, under certain disadvantages, and to this must be attributed, by the gentle and Christian reader, much of the peculiarities that characterize these conferences, and strip them of much of the point, and life, and spirit of antagonism which some persons might have expected.

In all these conversations I acted for the best, and to the best of my feeble judgment. If I have done wrong, either in my close examination of the services of the Roman Church, or in my mode of conducting these conversations, I have only to bow my head in meekness, and pray that He whom I desire to serve may pardon his servant.

I have now only to add, in reference to the accuracy of these notes, that they were always written on the very day on which each conversation was held. While actually in conversation, I often made it a point to make a note of what they said, and my mode of doing so was not discourteous, but seemed at the time to be giving importance to their words, as if they appeared to me deserving of an accurate record. But on every occasion, without exception, the moment

they left me I immediately committed the whole to paper. The conversations, as now presented to the public, are very little else than an accurate transcript of some of my notes thus taken at the time.

CHAPTER I.

An Ordination—A Visit of the Jesuits—Explanation of my Views—The Laying on of Hands—The priestly Power of Absolution and of Sacrifice—The Religious Movement at Oxford—The Religious Movement in Germany—The Nature of the Absolving Power—Whether Judicial or Declaratory—The Opinions of the two Churches compared.

THE day was far advanced when the hour appointed for the visit of the Jesuits had arrived. The morning had been occupied by me in attendance at the great church, or Basilica of S. Giovanni di Laterano. It is the Senior Basilica of Rome, taking precedence even of St. Peter's itself. The object of my attendance there was to witness the form of ordination. Ninety-two young men were that morning ordained, admitted into the various orders of the Church of Rome. They are seven in number, and I was glad of the opportunity of witnessing the ceremonial; and certainly it was a deeply interesting sight; for however I might dissent from the system of the Church, and however strongly I might feel at what might seem to be superstitious, or superfluous, or unscriptural, it yet could not fail of being a touching and beautiful sight, the self-devotion and vowed consecration of ninety-two men, in the flower and vigor of early manhood, to the

service of God. As the several candidates for the various orders performed the prescribed ceremonials, according to the rules of the Pontifical; as I held the Pontifical in my hand, and carefully followed every step in its performance; as I saw some standing, some kneeling, and some prostrate with face on the earth; as I observed some receiving one order and some another, in different yet regulated forms; as I saw the laying on of hands, the tonsure, the giving the chalice, the unfolding the chasuble, the tying the hands, the anointing the fingers, the washing, the communion, I could not but feel that the formalities were very puerile, but I felt still more my heart stirring within me in prayer that the Holy Ghost might indeed descend from above, and make them faithful and fearless in preaching the everlasting gospel of Christ. It was the cardinal-vicar who conferred the orders.

I had returned home after this spectacle, and was looking over the Pontifical, examining a point which had much impressed me, when two visitors were announced. They were two Jesuits. They came in the peculiar costume of the order. One was a priest, and the other a lay-brother; but, according to the rule of the order, as observed at Rome, they were robed alike, the whole body, from the padre-generale himself, to the lowliest lay-brother who is porter at the gate, being dressed in costume precisely the same. It consists of a black cassock, extending from the throat to the ankles, without any ornament beyond a little brass medal and chain appended to the waist. The cravat is white, but so narrow as to be scarcely observable above the cassock, and over all is a black

cloak, neat, plain, and without sleeves. The hat is remarkable for the great breadth of its leaf. It is not red like those of the cardinals, nor white like those of the camaldolines, nor decorated with rosettes and bands of orange, green, &c., like those of the prelates, all which seem so strange to our English tastes. It is black, and turned up slightly at the sides, without any bow or other ornament. The costume, as a whole, is neat and seemly, and as elegant and becoming as any ecclesiastical or academic costume can be. It certainly surpasses in this particular the style and appearance of the other monastic or religious orders, for it bears the stamp of studied neatness and propriety, while that of some of the other orders is exquisitely grotesque and ridiculous.

In a few moments we all were as much at ease as the peculiar object and nature of the visit could permit. The interchange of mutual courtesies and some words upon general subjects soon led to the object of our meeting.

The reverend padre opened it by saying that he had been directed to wait on me in consequence of my desire for information as to some particulars in the Church of Rome; that he was informed that I was an Anglican clergyman who was wishing to withdraw from the Church of England, and to hold communion with the Catholic Church; and that he came to assist me, as far as lay in his power, in carrying out my desire. And he concluded by asking me, in an earnest manner and in an under voice, whether there was any thing particular which I wished to communicate.

I did not choose to notice this *sotto voce* communi-

cation, but I said at once that there must be some mistake; that some one must have misinformed him; for that I was an attached member of the Church of England; that I had, as one of her clergy, held preferment in her, but had resigned my appointment; that I was perfectly independent in my circumstances and my feelings; that I had always been warmly opposed to the Church of Rome, as well as sincerely attached to the Church of England; and that I had now visited Rome with a desire to see and judge all things for myself, to change, modify, or confirm my former opinions, after a free and fair examination of every thing to which I might be so fortunate as to obtain access.

He stated at once, and with extreme courtesy, the pleasure he should feel in facilitating my object, and expressed his readiness to give me all the information in his power; but that he did not see why I should be unwilling to join the communion of his Church, since it was allowed by all parties that there was a true Church at Rome, and that there was no other than one, and therefore he thought that, as an Anglican clergyman, I might not be unwilling to do as did some others, namely, while at Rome, join in the communion of that church.

I replied that, whether rightly or wrongly founded, I felt great and strong prejudices against the Church of Rome; that all my feelings and experience were against her; and that I felt so many objections and difficulties against communicating with her, that there was much to be answered and removed before I could give him any hope of my joining her; but that I was

fully prepared to hear all that might be said in her defense, and that I believed myself sufficiently open to conviction, and sufficiently candid to acknowledge it, if convinced, and sufficiently fearless to act on it.

He questioned me as to the nature of my difficulties, and suggested naturally to me that I should state my objections, that he might have the opportunity of removing them.

I could not but acquiesce in this. It was precisely the position in which I desired to be placed. But I felt that my commencement must be with extreme caution, lest I should awaken suspicion and elicit actual opposition. I wished to be an inquirer rather than a controvertist; and I was led to begin with a point that exactly suited my object with a man who imagined me to be one of those who, under the name of Anglican clergy, have all their ideas and feelings, all their minds and hearts with the Roman Church. The Roman Pontifical was in my hands at the moment.

I told him that I had attended at the ordination that morning at S. Giovanni di Laterano; that I had observed what was to my mind a most remarkable omission, namely, the omission of the "laying on of hands" as the act of ordination; that, although there was at an early part of the ceremonial a laying on of hands, yet it was only for the purpose of designation, and not of ordination; as designating the person to be afterward ordained, and not as the act of ordination itself; that the candidates for orders were called *ordinandi* even after laying on of hands, showing that they were not regarded as ordained by that act, but

only set apart to be *afterward* ordained, and that they were not called *ordinati* until the chalice was given to them, with the words "*accipe potestatem*," &c., "receive power to offer the sacrifice of the mass for the living and the dead." I said that this showed that, in the Church of Rome, orders were conferred, not by laying on of hands with prayer, but by the delivering of the chalice, &c.; whereas, if, as some suppose in England, the virtue of orders in the apostolic succession can only pass through the hands of the ordaining bishop, there can be none such in the Church of Rome. In her the virtue or grace of the apostolic succession passes through the chalice, and not through the laying on of the hands of the bishop.

He replied by saying that the ordination was a continuous act—one that commenced with the laying on of hands, and ended with the delivering of the chalice; that though the former was for designation, and the latter was for ordination, yet with the former was connected the power of absolution, and with the latter the power of sacrificing; that by the former was conferred the power of absolving sins, and by the latter the power of offering the sacrifice of the mass. He argued thus that it was to be regarded as one act.

After some further conversation on this point, he went on to say that there were two distinct powers conferred upon a priest: one being inherent in his priesthood and inherent in every priest—a power over the literal and natural body of our Lord, that is, the power of transubstantiation; the other being null and void unless with the sanction of the bishop; not inherent in his priesthood, but ceded to the priest by the

bishop, that is, the power over his mystical or spiritual body—in other words, the power of absolution.

I said that I was to infer from this that a priest could celebrate mass, that is, could transubstantiate the bread and wine into Christ, and offer him for the sins of the living and the dead without the sanction of the bishop, but that he could not absolve the sins of his people without that episcopal sanction.

He replied that this was precisely the case; that he could celebrate mass without the bishop, but could not absolve from sins without the bishop; that the former power was inherent in his priesthood, the latter not.

I felt that he had placed himself in a difficult position by this statement; so I remarked, If a priest has no power to pronounce absolution without the bishop's license, and yet can say mass without it, then there can be no efficacy in the absolution which he reads, and which the canon of the mass requires him to read. Assuredly, if he can celebrate mass of his inherent power, he can give absolution of his inherent power; for that absolution is part of the mass, and is, therefore, involved in it.

His answer to this was very remarkable. He had no way of escape but one, and that one he did not hesitate to adopt. He said that the absolution involved in the mass is of no value or efficacy; that it is only a general absolution of persons of whose sins the priest knows nothing, and of whose repentance he knows nothing, and therefore it is of no efficacy or value, and has no effect; for, he continued, if the persons have repented, then God has already forgiven

them, and if they have not repented, then this absolution in the mass can not help them.

I was conscious of the advantage which I might derive from this statement, and I therefore took care to dwell on it and to reiterate it, that it might become an assumed point, an admitted principle between us, to be employed in our after-argument. I waited patiently till our conversation should take such a turn that I might avail myself effectively of so important an admission.

The conversation immediately took another direction. He asked me respecting the movement at Oxford, remarking that the Anglican Church was now in a most interesting state; that it was giving great promise of many and of better things; that the late or present religious movement within her was now interesting all Rome, and Europe, and the whole world. And he concluded by asking me my opinion of the movement.

This was the very last question that I wished to answer. I felt it might oblige me to avow my opinions sooner as well as more strongly than I desired. I feared the question might have been proposed with the view to test me—to ascertain my party, and thus to determine the course he should pursue. I knew that if I at once avowed myself a decided antagonist, he would withdraw from all further intercourse with me.

I therefore answered his inquiry by saying that I had been careful to read all the "Tracts for the Times," which were the profession of faith with those among whom the movement originated; that I did not agree with many of their statements and principles; and

that I thought that my reverend friend was mistaken as to their probable effect on the mind of the people of England — an effect of the very opposite character from that which seemed to be the intention of those who originated it.

He asked me whether I did not think that they tended to create a similarity or union of the Anglican Church with the Roman Church.

I replied that such seemed to be the intention of the parties. They seemed yearning for a union with Rome, but that I apprehended a very different and opposite result; that their proceedings would evoke, and indeed had already evoked, an antagonist spirit, which would be altogether too powerful for them, and I feared would do incalculable mischief to the Church.

He said he was aware that the Anglican bishops in general had set themselves against the movement, but he seemed to treat their interference very lightly. He then begged of me to explain my idea of the manner in which the movement was likely to operate.

I answered, that the Anglican Church stood between two systems—between Romanism and Dissent. These were the two extremes, to one or other of which all who loved extremes were likely to precipitate themselves. The party of the movement desired to draw her nearer and nearer to Rome—to give her more and more a similarity to the Church of Rome, and by that very course had led their opponents to run into the opposite extreme. It had evoked an antagonist spirit, that was sure to lead nearer and nearer to Dissent; and I added, that my own conviction was, that the real evil, the impending danger, was, the people for-

saking the Church of England, as a Church declining toward Rome, and then utterly overthrowing and destroying her—a danger like that which arose out of the proceedings of Archbishop Laud in the time of Charles I., namely, the utter subversion of the Church of England.

He intimated that he had not seen the movement in that light, but rather regarded it as one likely to lead the Church of England toward the Church of Rome; that all parties of all churches seemed agreed that the movement could not stop where it was; that the active movers would come over, and, if honest in their statements and sincere in their opinions, must come over, to the Church of Rome; and that so far, at least, the Church of Rome must be a gainer; that, however it might end for the Church of England, it must prove a gain to the Church of Rome; that they could not remain as they were, but must go further; and he felt that the course taken by such good men was certain to exert a great weight and influence upon others.

I was silent, except so far as assenting to his opinion respecting the parties engaged in the movement. He observed this, and continued to say that there was a large section of the Church of England—and that, too, an increasing section—steadily and surely inclining to the Church of Rome; that thus a great division existed in the very heart of the Church of England, and that thus there were many who would embrace, and were embracing, the very system against which I objected; and he added that although I might not be aware of the fact, yet he knew it from sources

of information that were not accessible to all, that multitudes in England were privately coming over to the Church of Rome.

On my remarking in reply that his statement was very probable, and that the members of his order, the order of Jesuits, were likely to have very accurate information, he said that the existence of such a division in the Church of England was a strong argument against my remaining in her, and that the multitude of good men leaving her and entering the Church of Rome was a further argument for my forsaking the one church and embracing the other; in short, that it formed a strong objection to remaining in the Church of England.

I said, in as quiet a tone as I could command, as if indifferent to the result of my words, that I did not see how his statement as to the facts, whether true or untrue, could affect the principle of the question; that I thought the argument derived from the existence of a division or counter-movement in a church was an argument that cut both ways; that at that moment there was a division and movement in the Church of Rome, arising out of the exhibition of the Holy Coat at Treves;* and that several of the priesthood were the leaders of the movement; that these parties were calling for a change or reformation in sev-

* This conversation was held when the excitement in Germany was at its height. The Roman government suppressed every newspaper of all nations mentioning it. The Roman people were profoundly ignorant of it, and even the English learned it only through the means of private correspondence. Newspapers describing it were suppressed at the post-office, and not delivered even to the English residents.

eral particulars; that they were demanding that the sacramental cup should be given to the laity; that some of them were actually administering it; that they were celebrating their services in the vernacular tongue; that they were calling for a rescinding of the laws on the celibacy of the priesthood; that this movement occurring in Germany, was quite as marked in the Church of Rome as the movement at Oxford in the Church of England; and therefore, I added, the movement in Germany was as cogent an objection to the Church of Rome, as the movement at Oxford was to the Church of England.

He flushed and fired at this statement, declaring that the movement in Germany was nothing; that they were only a set of rebels; that they were merely a few rebellious priests, who would soon be brought down. They were unworthy of notice, bad and rebellious priests, who would soon be reduced to obedience.

I said that he seemed mistaken; that as the papal government excluded "the Times," and other English, German, and French papers describing the movement, not permitting the facts to be made known at Rome, it was possible he was not aware of the extent and importance of the movement; that they circulated only those papers which were hostile to the movement, and that thus I apprehended he might be deceiving himself as to the extent and importance of the movement, which had already succeeded to a considerable extent.

My reverend friend was thoroughly upset and irritated by this turn of the conversation, and I was glad to let it pass to other topics, even though connected with the movement at Oxford. He observed that he

thought the Church of England very inconsistent toward these men and toward herself; that she admitted the ancient and Catholic sacrament of penance; that is, as he explained it, she recognized the power of absolution, but that she did not exercise it; that she went so far as to confer that power on her priests, but expelled them for exercising it; that the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches had rejected the thing altogether, and were therefore consistent, but that the Anglican Church admitted and recognized the thing —conferred the power on her priests—but did not exercise it, and was inconsistent.

I said that I thought he did wrong to the Anglican Church; that she recognized and held a certain power; that she conferred this power on her ministers; that those ministers exercised that power, and were not, as he supposed, expelled for it; that it was their duty and constant practice to exercise all, neither more nor less than the Church designed to confer on them. I then added that I feared he had misunderstood her formularies; that she confers only a power to declare or pronounce authoritatively God's absolution and forgiveness of sins, and that all her ministers exercise, and can not help in her daily services exercising this power, which is all the Church confers on them, and that, therefore, she is thus far consistent. But as she does not pretend to confer a judicial power to judge the sinner and absolve the sin, as in the Church of Rome, so her ministers do not pretend to exercise that, and thus there is no inconsistency.

His rejoinder to this was that our Lord conferred two powers, one to "bind" and the other to "loose;"

and that, as the bishops of the Anglican Church exercised the power of excommunication, they therein exercised the power to "bind" the sin upon the sinner, but never exercised the power of "loosing" by absolution, taking away the sin, and that this was a great inconsistency.

I answered that, by our laws, if a bishop excommunicated a person for any canonical fault, he must take off that excommunication, and again receive him, on his open repentance; that if he thus exercises one power, he must, under these circumstances, exercise the other; and that thus, if the excommunicating and restoring power of a bishop, peculiar as it was to the bishop, and not to the priest, was the power to "bind" and "loose," then both were exercised among us, and there was no inconsistency. I then added, that if his views were carried out, it would imply that the power to "bind" and "loose" belonged only to the bishops, and not to priests.

He avoided noticing this, and reiterated his statement in another form, saying that we ought to sit as judges on the sinner, and exercise a judicial power over him; either binding the sin on the sinner, or loosing him from his sin, and thus placing him sinless before God in order to his salvation.

I said that his words implied or seemed to convey an idea for which I was scarcely prepared, and therefore I asked, If the "loosing" the sinner from his sin makes him sinless before God, and so secures his salvation, would not the "binding" his sin upon the sinner keep him sinful before God, and so insure his damnation? I added that one must be coextensive

with the other, and it would be placing the damnation as well as the salvation of the man in the hands of the priest.

He avoided this, and, as if he had never heard me, turned away to other subjects of a more general nature. I felt very unwilling to keep him to the point, lest by doing so he might be led to regard me as a controversialist prepared to dispute with him, rather than as an Anglican clergyman in a friendly conversation, seeking for information.

It was not long before we returned to the judicial power of the priest. In reference to this, he said that the priest was a judge to give or withhold forgiveness, to bind or loose the sin, as he judges best. He must form his judgment to the best of his power, and bind or loose accordingly; and then God confirms and fulfills that judgment, binding in hell or loosing in heaven, according as the priest, who was his judge and reconciler, should adjudge.

I asked whether—seeing that the priest was but a man, and therefore liable to an error in judgment—his judgment was always and certainly confirmed and fulfilled by God, damning or saving, according as the priest bound or loosed on earth. I added that my question had special reference to such a supposed case as the priest making an error in judgment; as in that case, although in error, it would seem that he had unlimited power for saving or damning, if his judgment on earth was always confirmed in heaven.

He replied, that of course, where the priest, as judge, erred in his judgment as to the repentance of the sinner and the absolution of the sin, his judgment

was not affirmed by God; that in that case, though he bound on earth, yet it was not bound in heaven, and though he loosed on earth, it was not loosed in heaven.

I said I wished to understand this point clearly, and begged he would correct me if I was wrong in inferring that if the priest judged erroneously as to the repentance or non-repentance of the sinner, and if he acted on that erroneous judgment in binding or loosing the sinner, it would then be of no avail. I asked especially whether, in such a case, the absolution of this judge, sitting and judging judicially, was of any value.

He answered emphatically that it was "void."

I felt that now the argument was in my hands, and my mind turned in secret to Him who alone could still my nervous throbbings and excitement, and enable me to speak with calmness and accuracy; for, at times, when I considered that I was dealing with men on whom I had always learned to look as the most subtle controversialists, I feared the truth might fail in my inability to cope with them.

I reminded him that he had made two admissions, or, rather, had laid down two things, which seemed to me all-important in this point. In the first place, he had freely stated that, *if the sinner had not repented*, then the absolution of the priest, however pronounced, was "void." In the second place, he had frankly stated, at the commencement of our conversation respecting the absolution in the mass, that *if the sinner had indeed repented*, then the absolution was useless, inasmuch as he was already absolved by God; and

having on repentance received forgiveness from God himself, he did not need the absolution of man. It would be reversing the words, and reading, not "whatsoever is loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven," but "whatsoever is loosed in heaven shall be loosed on earth." It was doing over again what had been already done by God himself. I stated that every man in England, on hearing his statements respecting the judicial power of absolving, would argue that if the sinner *did repent*, the absolution of man was useless, inasmuch as he had already the forgiveness of God; and if the sinner *did not repent*, the absolution, on his own showing, was void, as arising from an error of judgment in the priest. I added, that this was a process of reasoning which ought to be answered, and that I should feel glad if he could supply me with an adequate answer, for if the point were placed in the form of a dilemma, I could see no way of escape. As thus: The sinner is repentant or he is not: If he is repentant, the absolution is useless and unnecessary, as God has already forgiven him: If he is not repentant, the absolution is void, as already admitted; and therefore, under these circumstances, I could not see any advantage in the judicial power over the declaratory power.

He perfectly understood me, as I thought, but instead of endeavoring to solve the difficulty of the dilemma, he laughed at the idea of a declaratory power. He said that a power to declare and pronounce the forgiveness of sins was not the power promised to the Church; that power was a power or privilege, not peculiar to the priesthood, but common to the laity;

that the power promised by our Lord to his Church was a power peculiar to the office of the priesthood, and that, therefore, it could not be the power of declaring and pronouncing the forgiveness of sins, inasmuch as all men, not only priests, but laymen—not only men, but women, can pronounce and declare that forgiveness; and therefore, he argued, the priestly power of absolving must be not only declaratory, but judicial.

I said, in reply to this, that however satisfactory his statement might appear to the Italian mind, I apprehended it would prove otherwise to the mind of England; that it was there felt that a layman could declare God's forgiveness of sin as well and as accurately as a clergyman, but not so authoritatively. I said, if the sovereign of England sends a message of peace or of war, or aught else, to the sovereign of France, it is sent through a special messenger, a herald or embassador, or other authorized person. Such person comes with authority. His message is declared with authority. He is not the judge to decide judicially whether there shall be peace or war, but he is to "declare and pronounce" with authority the message of the sovereign. But any other man, even any woman, may deliver that message as well, as clearly, and as accurately, but not as authoritatively. All such speak without authority. The appointed or authorized person alone speaks with authority. In the same way God sends forth his message, through "the ministers and stewards of the Church." They are the authorized heralds or embassadors of Heaven. They go forth with authority. And though other

persons may deliver the message of forgiveness of sins as clearly and as well, yet they do so without the authority of the commissioned persons. Again, I continued to argue, if a sovereign, in the exercise of his prerogative, pardons a criminal, any person may tell that criminal of his coming pardon, may "declare and pronounce" his pardon; but the criminal will not be satisfied or comforted with the words of these unauthorized persons, and he waits for the sheriff or lawful officer—he waits for the authorized person, who alone can come with authority, to "declare and pronounce" the sovereign's pardon. And thus we arrive at two points: first, the official does not sit himself as judge, to act judicially and confer the pardon, but only to "declare and pronounce" the forgiveness of the sovereign; and, secondly, he does it with authority, as the only authorized person, and therefore he does it far more acceptably and satisfactorily than can be done by any unauthorized person. This, I stated, was the true position of the ministers of the Church.

He seemed at a loss for a reply to this, acknowledging that there certainly was a great advantage in the declaration being made by an authorized minister or official; that there was some difference between the authorized minister on one hand, and the unauthorized layman on the other, pronouncing and declaring God's forgiveness of sins. But still, he thought it an inconsistency in the Church of England retaining the form in her Liturgy, and not exercising the power in her practice; and he felt this the more strongly, as he could understand the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Dissenters, who rejected the whole doc-

trine; they rejected all pretension to this power, and therefore were consistent in not exercising it; but the Anglican Churches alone had retained the hierarchy, the Liturgy, and other elements of the Church, admitting the existence of this power of absolution, but wholly neglecting to exercise it. He added, that Christ gave to the apostle Peter the power to bind and loose, to absolve and retain sins; that that power was inherent in the priesthood of the Catholic Church, and that it ought to be exercised for the punishment of the sinner and for the comfort of the penitent.

I said that I feared he had misunderstood the nature of the power of which he spake, and I endeavored to explain my views of it. I commenced by stating that the words binding and loosing, absolving and retaining, were words in use among the Jews in reference to leprosy and to lepers. When a man was afflicted with leprosy, the priest was required, under the law, to declare him unclean, and therefore to shut him up, or bind or retain him, thus excluding him from the congregation, lest he might infect others with his loathsome disease; and when the man was healed, the priest pronounced him clean, and then loosed or absolved him, and permitted him again to mingle with the people. Now our Lord, in using this language, referred to that which was familiar to the people. It is this explains our Lord's words. On referring to the law of leprosy, as set forth in Leviticus xiii., the words employed in the Septuagint are of vast importance on this particular. When the man was brought to the priest and seen to be leprous, the priest was to declare or pronounce him unclean. The

word is μεανεῖ, that is, the priest shall defile him—shall unclean him; whereas the man was already defiled or unclean, and the priest was not to give the leprosy to the man, but only to declare and pronoune that he was defiled or unclean by the disease. The priest is thus said to do that which he only declares or pronounces is already done by God. Again, when the man is recovered, and the priest sees him cured by the hand of God, then he was to declare and pronounce him clean. The word is καθαριεῖ, that is, the priest shall clean him; whereas the man was already clean of his leprosy, and the priest was not to take away the disease, but only to declare and pronounce that the man was clean. The priest is thus said to do that which he only declared and pronounced to be already done by God. It is evident that the priest neither gave the disease nor cured the disease—neither imparted it nor took it away. It was the Almighty who both inflicted it and removed it; and yet, in the language of Leviticus, the priest is said to do both one and the other; and therefore it may be argued that, in the language of Scripture, the priest is said himself to do that which he is only appointed to declare and pronounce to be already done in the providence of God. This language pervades the whole law of leprosy, being repeated again and again: see verses 3, 6, 11, 13, &c. And as the Septuagint was in general use in our Lord's days, so his language, adopted from the Jewish habit or mode of speech, was clearly understood; and when he desired his apostles to bind and loose the sinner, to forgive and retain the sin, he meant no more than that they, like the priest

in the matter of leprosy, were to declare and pronounce the forgiveness of sins, using phrases perfectly intelligible to Jews, implying that God had already forgiven them. I added that as the Church of England only gave this power to her ministers, and intended no more than this in her Liturgy, her ministers dared not proceed further. They exercised all the power they received or possessed, and therefore were not liable to the charge of inconsistency as possessing a power which they did not exercise.

He made no attempt to weaken this explanation of the peculiar phraseology of the Jewish law, as adopted by our Lord, but dwelt on the comfort and advantage of allowing a judicial power to the priesthood; and then leaving this subject altogether, he entered upon a narration of the circumstances connected with the conversion of a Lutheran minister of Germany, who had forsaken all, and coming to Rome, was graciously received by the pope, and was led to embrace the faith and practice of the Church of Rome. He then detailed the circumstances connected with the conversion of a Protestant clergyman of America, who had come to Rome with his wife and children, and was received into the Church. He was now studying and preparing for admission into the order of the Jesuits, and also for admission to the priesthood. He had already been admitted into the inferior orders. His wife, by the kindness of his holiness the pope, was admitted into a nunnery, and, being musical, assists in giving musical instruction to the pupils who attend at the nunnery. She has not, however, as yet, taken the veil, or made those vows by which she is to be forever re

moved from her husband, and he may be enabled to enter into the priesthood.

My reverend friend dwelt at considerable length, and with lively interest, on the conversion of these parties. He seemed to think his narrative might have some effect in inducing me to follow the example. But, although I watched narrowly his detail, yet I could observe nothing in the way of argument or motive that requires repetition here. I did not interrupt his narration, but he stated at the conclusion his regret that he could not meet me again for some weeks, as he was about to enter upon what they call the "Retreat," that is, the appointed retirement in the more solitary life of a recluse. In this retirement, according to the rule of the Jesuits, he was to be engaged for some weeks in reviewing the past, and in meditation upon God, and in reflections on the state of his own soul. In this solitude he was to be occupied in examining for what object God had sent him into this world; how far he had heretofore been employed in carrying out that object; what he had really been doing in time past for the glory of his God; and what he would now prepare and resolve to accomplish for the future. He dwelt on all this in a manner that showed he wished to impress my mind with a sense of the holiness and devotion that characterized the order of the Jesuits; and after courteously expressing many regrets that he was precluded by the rules of his order from conferring further with me till his "retreat" was concluded, he proposed to introduce to me some other members of the order, to converse with me in the mean time, and give me any informa-

tion I might require or they could impart. I thanked him warmly for the opportunity he thus afforded me of extending my acquaintance among the Roman priesthood, and with reciprocal expressions of kindness and courtesy we parted.

The next day he again visited me, and introduced two others, who remained with me for some hours. He himself immediately retired. And thus an unexpected way was opened to an extended acquaintance with men whom I could not otherwise have known. They introduced me kindly and courteously to their college, and presented me to all their professors of the Collegio Romano. Some of my conversations with these gentlemen shall hereafter be narrated.

CHAPTER II.

The Grossness of some Superstitions—Whether sanctioned by the Church of Rome—Contrast between the Religion of the English and the Italians—The Virtue of miraculous Pictures—The Reality of their Miracles asserted and explained—A Convert in a Nunnery—Parallel between Eve and Mary—The Religion of Christ becoming the Religion of Mary—The Nature of this Process explained—Mary more Merciful than Christ.

VERY shortly after this interview, one of my friends, who had undertaken to resolve my doubts and remove my objections to the Church of Rome, visited me again, and, after some preliminary conversation, invited me to state my feelings.

I commenced by stating that I was very intimate

with many of the popular objections to the Church of Rome; that those objections had considerable influence upon many holy and good men; that although some persons regarded them as founded on what might perhaps be regarded as an extravagant portraiture, as a caricature of Romanism, yet they had considerable weight, and ought to be clearly got rid of and removed from the field of controversy. I stated that there appeared to be many things that seemed not only extravagant, but even impossible, from their palpable absurdity; things that at times seemed so gross that no reasonable credulity could stand them, and had the effect of raising an insurmountable objection against any communion with the Church of Rome, if, indeed, these things were part and parcel of her system, or in any way essential to her completeness; and I added, that if they were not essential, they ought to have been got rid of as offensive to so many persons.

He replied that he quite felt that there were many things to which my remarks would very justly apply, but that there were many others that were extravagant or absurd only in appearance; and that it not unfrequently occurred that those things that at one time seemed liable to insurmountable objections, were afterward adopted by converts without the least scruple or difficulty. He therefore wished me to specify some illustration.

I referred, in return, to the miraculous picture of the Virgin Mary in the Church of S. Maria Maggiore; to the miraculous image of our Lord as a child in the church at Aracœli; to the miraculous image

of the Virgin Mary in the Church of the Augustines; and to several other pictures and images, which were said to be miraculous, and which were worshiped with a special and peculiar devotion—were crowned and carried in procession precisely as the ancient heathens of Rome used to carry the images of their gods. I stated that these things seemed very gross, and that usually, in England, the advocates of the Church of Rome got rid of all objections derived from them by disavowing all these things as abuses, as exaggerations, as bad or superstitious practices, which were not acknowledged or practiced by the well-informed, and were not approved by the Church. I therefore would take the opportunity of asking him, living as he did at the fountain-head, and capable of informing me with some authority, whether others or myself could be justified in setting the objection aside in that way, namely, by attributing these things to the ignorance of the foolish and superstitious.

He answered without the least hesitation, and in a manner that took me by surprise. He answered that I had taken a very wrong view of these particulars in regarding them as extravagant or absurd; for, although they might appear strange to me, as at one time they had appeared to himself—so strange, indeed, as sometimes to be absolutely loathsome to his feelings—and although he felt himself unable to justify them in themselves, yet there was no doubt of their being approved in practice by the Church; that they were no exaggeration or caricature, but real verities, which at one time were a stumbling-block and offense to his own mind. He added that there was

much that might be said in their favor, for that the Italians were a people very different from the English; that the English loved a religion of the *heart*, and the Italians a religion of the *senses;* the English a religion of the *feelings*, and the Italians a religion for the *taste;* the English *an inward and spiritual religion*, and the Italian *an outward and visible religion;* and that it was the intention of the Church, as well as her duty, to arrange all the rites, ceremonies, acts, services of religion, so as to be suitable to an outward and visible religion, and calculated for the mind of Italy; and thus those particulars concerning the crowning and processions of miraculous pictures and miraculous images, however strange and absurd to the English, have been sanctioned by the Church as both natural and wise to the Italians.

I expressed in strong terms my surprise at the position he had taken, expecting that he would have denied or softened these things, instead of asserting and defending them. And I took the opportunity of alluding to the coronation of the picture of Mary, in S. Maria Maggiore—a coronation by the present pope (Gregory XII.), who crowned it amid religious services with his own hands. I also alluded to the procession which conducted the same picture through the streets, in order to suppress the cholera—a procession in which the present pope joined bare-footed; and I asked whether we were to regard these acts, in which all the chiefs of the Church, as the pope, cardinals, bishops, &c., took an active part, as the acts of the Church, sanctioning the opinions that pictures could work miracles, and that the procession of a picture of the Virgin Mary

could possibly stay the virulence of the cholera, and that any particular picture was entitled to any special or peculiar devotion, as a coronation—in short, entitled to more veneration than other pictures.

To this he replied with frankness and decision, saying that he had no doubt, and that there could be no doubt whatever, as to the miraculous powers of some images and pictures; and he explained the matter thus. It sometimes occurred, he said, that some persons were affected—specially affected or moved by some pictures or images more than by others; that, in praying before these, their feelings were more touched, their sensibilities more excited, and their devotional affections more drawn out in prayer; that, in answer to such prayer, God not unfrequently gave responses which were more marked than ordinary, and were to be regarded as miraculous answers to prayers made before miraculous pictures or images.

I could not avoid showing my incredulity as to all this, and I certainly was as surprised as I was incredulous.

He observed this, but only continued to express himself more strongly, stating that there was no doubt whatever as to the reality of many miracles of this nature in answer to such prayers; and that, when the report of these miracles spread abroad, when the public heard of them, when the minds of the devout were excited by the fame of them, then multitudes of persons naturally flocked to such pictures and images to pray before them; and their feelings being excited, and their affections being the more drawn out by the circumstance, there were yet again other miracles

wrought by God, and so these images and pictures became miraculous. He added that the picture of the Virgin at S. Maria Maggiore was such; that the image of Mary at the church of the Augustinians was such; and that the picture of St. Ignatius praying to the Virgin in the Church of Gesu was, with many others, also miraculous.

I must frankly confess that I was wholly unprepared for this. In all my former experience of controversy in Ireland and England, I had been told that all those were the mere abuses of the superstitious, and not sanctioned by the learned, if, indeed, such things were believed or practiced any where. I had often heard them denounced as mere fabrications—pure inventions to injure the character of the Church of Rome, and I felt much surprise to find them not only believed and practiced, but defended. I felt that it was opening out to me a new state of things, a new phase of mind, and a totally new system of faith or credulity which I had never anticipated. A mind must be in a peculiar state to believe in the miraculous powers of a picture or image.

His explanation led me to advance a step in our argument, and to say that his statements seemed to imply that there was something peculiar to those images and pictures, something inherent in them as compared with others, something not in the saint or angel represented, but in these very pictures and images themselves. I endeavored to illustrate my meaning by suggesting two pictures of the Virgin Mary placed side by side, and asking whether one being supposed to be miraculous, the people would pray before that

one rather than the other; and whether he believed the Virgin Mary would interfere with a miraculous answer for those who prayed to her before that one rather than the other. I added, that if such was the case, it went to prove a belief that there was something peculiar, some virtue or power, something miraculous in such a picture, in one rather than the other, and that the distinction proved that the people did look for something in pictures and images more than the persons whom they were designed to represent.

He gave the fullest assent to this, saying that they looked first of all to the saint represented in the picture or image, and that then, in case there was a miraculous character, they looked also to that power or virtue. He added, that his full belief was, that the Virgin Mary was more partial to some representations of herself than to others; and that, in order to induce the devout to pray before these her favorite ones, she heard and answered the prayers so offered, while she neglected those that were offered elsewhere; answering the prayers offered before one picture which she liked, and refusing those offered before a picture which she did not like.

This was a degree of credulity, not to say superstition, for which I was wholly unprepared; and I felt that there must be something in the atmosphere of Italy, or something in the training of the mind of Italy, that could lead an intelligent, a traveled, and educated man to such a state of credulity. I took occasion to remark—which I did with all possible courtesy, to avoid giving offense—that these things created an insurmountable barrier between England and Rome.

I frankly stated that my judgment rejected, while my feelings recoiled and revolted from them; that, so long as they might be regarded as mere abuses, or mere exaggerations of enthusiastic votaries, or as the pious frauds of monks and friars, they might be borne with as things to be flung away by the wise and good; but if regarded as true—these pictures as miraculous pictures, these miracles as true miracles, such worship of the Virgin a right worship—they then presented a difficulty which could not be overcome. I felt it strange that all these things, so denied in England by the advocates of Romanism, should be so frankly avowed in Rome by the most intelligent of her priesthood.

In reply to all this, which he received in a most amiable spirit, he said that he could quite enter into my feelings; that his experience was not small, and that he knew of instances where things that were at first viewed with loathing were afterward received with facility. He mentioned the case of a lady who had been a Protestant, but who had entered the Church of Rome and a convent together. On going for the first time to confession, the penance imposed for some little sin was—to say *the Litany of the blessed Virgin Mary!* She declined, stating how repulsive that Litany was still to her opinions and feelings, so that she could not bring herself to say it, and begged that some other penance, which she could perform, might be imposed in its stead. Her request was complied with, and she was satisfied. And now her opinions and feelings have gradually and so completely changed, that she is able to repeat this Litany without the least repugnance. He continued to say, that if I changed

my religion, I should experience a similar change in myself, and that what now seemed revolting would become in time very easily received.

I felt that this was an unhappy case, as it seemed to argue that the lady had only stifled her feelings and concealed her opinions, and perhaps had become hardened by use. And having already heard something of her hard lot, her struggles with want, her admission into a nunnery to enable her to live, it looked as if her sad circumstances had led to her steeling her heart, and becoming careless as to any form of worship. My wife afterward met her in her convent, and had some conversation with her. She invited my wife to attend the service in the chapel of the nunnery. My wife stated that she had heard it was requested that all who entered the chapel should kneel and worship the Host, and that no one was admitted unless on that understanding. She replied that such was the case, but that my wife should remember that God *might* be in the Host, and that she might therefore safely worship him there. My wife said that she knew very well that God was not in the Host more than in any thing else, and that, believing this, she could not worship it without committing idolatry. The lady rejoined that surely she could kneel and say her own prayers secretly without saying them to the Host. My wife replied that would be insincerity and hypocrisy; appearing in body to join in the worship, while in spirit being far otherwise. The lady promptly suggested that even this was better than giving offense to the congregation by refusing to worship the Host. Upon which my wife replied, it was better

still to absent herself, and so neither offend God on one hand nor the congregation on the other. This conversation left a very unfavorable impression on my wife as to the simplicity and sincerity of the religious profession of this converted lady. But to return:

My clerical friend, after a pause, which I was unwilling to break, lest I should express myself as strongly as I felt, resumed the conversation, and said, that the worship of the Virgin Mary was a growing worship in Rome; that it was increasing in depth and intenseness of devotion; and that there were now many of their divines, and he spoke of himself as agreeing with them in sentiment, who were teaching that as a woman brought in death, so a woman was to bring in life; that as a woman brought in sin, so a woman was to bring in holiness; that as Eve brought in damnation, so Mary was to bring in salvation; and that the effect of this opinion was largely to increase the reverence and worship given to the Virgin Mary.

I said that I had read something of the kind, and also that I had seen a sort of parallel in some of the Fathers on the subject, but that it did not go so far as the modern opinion. But in order not to misunderstand him, and to prevent any mistake as to his views, I asked whether I was to understand him as implying that, as we regard Eve as the first sinner, so we are to regard Mary as the first Savior; one as the author of sin, and the other as the author of the remedy.

He replied that such was precisely the view he wished to express, and he added that it was taught by St. Alphonso de Liguori, and was a growing opin-

ion. He seemed to think, from my seriousness of manner, that he had made an impression on me very different from the reality, for I was deeply grieved at his statement, in which there was not the least allusion to Christ. Mary seemed to be substituted for Christ.

I felt that he had gone very far, but I also felt he had not gone further than my own impressions as to the religion of Italy, so far as I had seen it. I therefore took the opportunity of saying what otherwise I would have been unwilling to express. I introduced it by some courteous and apologetic expressions, to prevent his taking any offense, and assured him I felt happy in being able to speak my mind to one so capable of understanding and appreciating my feelings, and I prayed him not to be offended at my freedom. I then stated, with all the seriousness the subject demanded, and all the solemnity I could command, that, from all I had observed of the religion of Italy, whether as exhibited in the churches, displayed in processions, or expressed in private; whether as exhibited in the forms of prayer, in the object of worship, in the books of devotion, or in the conversation of the people, it appeared to me to be characterized by one great feature, which forced itself unceasingly on my mind. It seemed to me that all tended to the honor of Mary rather than to the honor of Christ; and that this seemed to me to be carried to such an extreme, that I felt in my calm and sober judgment that the religion of Italy ought to be called *the religion of Mary* rather than *the religion of Christ!* I again apologized for so strong an opinion, but added that, feeling strongly on the point, I wished to express myself with

a frankness and sincerity, which I hoped he would excuse.

I watched anxiously to see the impression of my words; I feared that, as they would have elicited a burst of indignation, real or affected, among the Romanists of England or of Ireland, so they might possibly cause some offense even in Italy; but it was far otherwise. He seemed quite unmoved, as if he received my words as a matter of course—as expressing something very natural and of no unfrequent occurrence. His reply was made with perfect ease and entire frankness.

He stated that my impression was very natural; that such was really the appearance of things; that, coming from Germany, where Christ on the cross was the ordinary object of veneration, into Italy, where the Virgin Mary was the universal object of reverence, it was no more than natural such an impression should have been created; that such an impression was very much the reality of the case; and that, to his own knowledge, the religion of Italy was latterly becoming less and less the religion of Christ; and that "the devotion to the most Holy Virgin," as he called it, was certainly on the increase.

I was perfectly startled, not, indeed, at the statement itself, for it was too palpably true to escape the observation of any one, but that a man, a minister of Christianity, should describe such a state of things with the manifest approval he exhibited. We were shocked.

He perceived this, and then proceeded to justify himself with an ingenuity and address that laid open

the system, and exhibited the worship of Mary in a new light, at least in a light in which I had never seen it before. He stated that there was a great difference in the bent or habit of mind between English Protestants on one hand and Italian Romanists on the other; that Protestants habitually let their minds dwell on Christ's teaching, on Christ working miracles, and especially on Christ's suffering, bleeding, dying on the cross, so that in a Protestant mind the great object was Christ in the maturity of his manhood, but that Romanists habitually dwelt on the childhood of Christ; not on the great events that were wrought in maturity and manhood, but on those interesting scenes which were connected with his childhood. He then went on to say that this habit of mind led to the great difference, that as Protestants always dwelt on the suffering and dying Christ, so Christ in a Protestant mind was always connected with the cross; and that as Romanists constantly meditated rather on the childhood of Christ, so Christ in a Romanist's mind was usually associated with his mother, the Virgin Mary. He then continued to say that the constant dwelling of the mind in contemplation on the child naturally led to more thought, more contemplation, more affection, and, finally, more devotion for the mother; that when one thinks on all the little scenes of His childhood, dwells on the little incidents of interest between the child Jesus and the mother Mary, recollects that she had him enshrined in her womb, that she used to lead him by the hand, that she had listened to all his innocent prattle, that she had observed the opening of his mind, and that

during all those days of his happy childhood she, and she alone of all the world, knew that little child whom she bore in her womb, and nursed at her breasts, and fondled in her arms, was her God; that when a man thinks, and habitually thinks of all this, the natural result is, that his affections will be more drawn out, and his feelings of devotion more elevated toward Mary. And he concluded by stating that this habit of mind was becoming more general, and that it was to it that he would attribute the great increase that late years had witnessed in the devotion to the Virgin Mary.

My wife and myself were much struck with all this. It was, I must freely acknowledge, perfectly new to me, and greatly interested us. It was a new view of the system, of the means by which the system is spread, and quite a new phase of mind; while the pleasing manner, and evident sincerity and enthusiasm of the man, gave an additional charm to his words. We did not conceal the interest we felt in his statement, and he seemed pleased at his success, and continued:

He said that all this devotion to Mary, however repugnant to the feelings and judgments of Protestants, was capable of being justified, or at least was capable of being accounted for on a principle very well known, and recognized among Protestants themselves. He said it was to be ascribed to the feeling universal among Romanists, that the Virgin Mary was more merciful, more gentle, and more ready to hear than Christ; and he added, that among Protestants it was often thought that the Son, Jesus Christ, was more

merciful, gentle, and ready to hear than God the Father, from their feeling that in the manhood of Jesus Christ there is that which creates a sympathy in Him with them; and that in the same way Romanists feel that there is even more in the Virgin Mary common with them, so as to create still greater sympathy on her part.

On my wife remarking here upon the unsoundness of the idea which he attributed to Protestants, namely, regarding the Son as more merciful, and gentle, and ready to hear than the Father, adding that the Father showed his love in giving his Son, as much as the Son in giving himself—on this he at once assented that the principle was unsound and wrong, and involved a very false view of the Godhead, but that yet there were many among Protestants who held it in their ignorance; and that many of them, influenced by it, do actually pray to the Son more than to the Father. They feel that the Son is Man as well as God, and that manhood insures a sympathy which makes him more accessible; and that the Romanists feel that Mary is *altogether* of their own nature, and that this insures a more perfect sympathy, so as to make Mary more accessible than Christ, and that this feeling leads them to pray with more frequency, as well as with more confidence, to Mary than to Christ.

It was impossible not to recognize the ingenuity of this, and, at the same time, it was as impossible not to acknowledge that there was too much justice in what he stated as to the feeling of many Protestants. But it was saddening indeed to the heart to witness the wiles and subtleties with which the fallen heart is

ensnared and the fallen intellect entangled; and still more saddening, even to fearfulness and trembling, to hear the Savior practically dethroned from his High Priesthood and Mediatorship, and one of his creatures exalted to his place, as the object of affection, devotion, and prayer, on the ground of so awful an error as that Mary is more merciful, more gentle, and more ready to hear than Christ. I knew the danger of speaking out—of speaking my opinions openly, and yet I could not let such a statement pass without some notice; that, even if it had no effect on him, would at least clear my own conscience. So I spoke of the love of Christ—a love exhibited in leaving the heavens for us; a love exhibited in all the sweetness of his words; a love exhibited in all the benevolence of his acts; and, above all, a love exhibited in all the mysterious agony in the garden, the infinite sufferings of the judgment hall, and the awful scenes of Calvary—even a love still exhibited in the heavens, where he yet pleads for the sinner, as if heaven were no heaven to him if his people be not there! And I asked how it was possible that there could be imagined a Being more merciful, more gentle, or more ready to hear? "God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" and "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend;" and again, He pleads himself with us, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Here indeed is love expressed and proved, and there is neither love expressed nor love proved by the Virgin Mary; while

it seems the basest ingratitude, the most heartless return to a Savior of such infinite love, "a love that passeth knowledge," to harbor for one moment the thought that it could be surpassed, especially by one who at the best is but a creature still.

I do not think that this produced any serious impression on my companion; and certainly it had no effect on his reasoning further than to say that he thought it a wrong principle for Protestants to regard Christ as more merciful than the Father, and so making that a ground for praying more frequently to him; but that it was the very same principle, only applied to the Virgin Mary, that led the Church of Rome to regard her as more merciful than Christ, and therefore to pray more frequently to her.

I observed here that this took away the ground on which they prayed to Mary so much more frequently than to Christ; and that, to say the least of the system, the praying to her more frequently than to him bore the complexion of idolatry—as lowering him and exalting her, and giving the love, the devotion, the prayers to Mary, which ought to be rendered to God alone.

He rejoined by saying that there was a distinction always observed in the minds of the people between the worship rendered to Christ and the worship rendered to Mary.

I replied, that although the more intelligent and enlightened of the Roman Church might understand and be able to maintain that distinction while in the act of worship, yet it was evident that the mass of the population, and of the children, were both incapable of

understanding it or of observing it. I added that the distinction of their theologians between Latria, Dulia, and Hyperdulia had never been clearly defined, and that I had never met a member of the Church of Rome, whether ecclesiastical or lay, who could clearly state the difference between them.

In answer to this, he said that, however difficult it was to explain—and he acknowledged it was very difficult, yet it was universally known and understood—that the youngest children and the most ignorant adults all recognized the distinction, and could never fall into any mistake respecting it; but that, feeling that Christ was the Almighty God infinitely above them, and that Mary was a creature like themselves, and of the same human feelings with themselves, they conceived she would have more sympathies with them, and therefore they prayed more frequently to her.

To this I rejoined by again expressing my conviction that it was impossible that the mass of the poor and ignorant people could understand the distinctions which their most learned theologians were unable to explain; that although they were told that *latria* belonged to God, *hyperdulia* to the Virgin, and *dulia* to the saints—that although they were told of these three kinds of worship, yet they could not distinguish between them, and most certainly could not act upon them; that frequently they prayed in the same form for the same objects, and in the very same words, to God, and to Mary, and to the saints, without making the least difference between them.

I then referred to the well-known prayer, to the saying of which, in the year 1817, an indulgence of

three hundred days was attached. It was in the words:

"Jesus, Joseph, Mary, I give you my heart and soul;

"Jesus, Joseph, Mary, assist me in my last agony;

"Jesus, Joseph, Mary, I breathe my soul to you in peace."

Here, I said, was a prayer addressed to God, to the Virgin, and to a saint—addressed to one and all alike, addressing them for the very same objects, and making no distinction whatever between them. Here was a case in which the three degrees of worship were all demanded. There was God, for whom *latria* was required; *hyperdulia* for the Virgin; and *dulia* for Joseph. And I added, that as the people used the same words to each—employed the same form of petition to each—asked for the same things from each—offered and expressed the same devotion to each, it could hardly be asserted that they were not worshiping them all alike.

He evidently felt this a great difficulty. He acknowledged that he knew the prayer, and that it was of frequent use among the people, and that at first appearance it looked objectionable; but he insisted that the people knew the distinction so well, that no man, or woman, or child could possibly fall into the error of praying to God, and Mary, and Joseph alike. It might appear to me that their words, and form, and manner of worship being the same, the worship itself was the same; but that nothing was more certain than that they observed a distinction in their own minds, and did not really pray to them, or worship

them alike, even in that prayer, which was addressed to Jesus, Joseph, and Mary simultaneously.

I felt that reasoning further on this precise point was neither profitable nor judicious, and therefore only remarked that I was well able to judge of the form of prayer itself, and knew that it was addressed to all alike, but that, as to distinctions in the minds of the people, neither he nor I could be competent judges. Neither of us could read the heart, and therefore neither of us ought to say any thing as to what may or may not be in the secret mind of others. Our province is to judge of the outward action, and that outward action was one of prayer and devotion to all the three alike.

He made no objection to this, but directed our conversation into another channel. It was some time before I could bring him back, without any apparent effort, to the same point. He then resumed it by alluding to something that had passed between us; and then remarked, as he had done on that occasion, that the devotion to the Virgin Mary was very popular; that latterly it was become increasingly so; and that he knew personally of many facts that proved it to be a growing devotion among all classes.

My wife remarked that she had been in conversation with a religious Italian lady, who was lamenting the vice and wickedness that abounded in Rome, and who concluded by saying that her only consolation and hope for Rome was, that the devotion to the Most Holy Mary, *santissima Maria*, was so much on the increase!

He stated that such was the fact, and proceeded to

relate some little incidents to illustrate it. He mentioned the frequency with which he hears the poor and simple people praying to the Virgin, singing hymns to her pictures at the corners of the streets early in the morning, appealing to her for protection in moments of danger; and he detailed a scene which he had himself witnessed. It was the case of a very little child, that conceived itself in great danger, and immediately cried aloud to the Virgin, "O Mamma, Mamma Mia, Mamma Mia, O Mamma!" He supposed the little child so well taught to regard the Virgin Mary as her heavenly Mother, and so truly pious and devoted, as to have addressed these words to her; and he was touched to tears—the tear glistened in his eye as he told the incident, being evidently touched at the idea of so much piety in so young a child.

I remarked at the moment that to me it seemed as if the child was only crying for its own mother—at least it was like the cry of some child in England, who had never heard of the Virgin Mary.

He said that in the case he mentioned there was no doubt that it was the cry of a child appealing to its heavenly Mother. He added that there was something among the Italians—something in the Italian mind, and Italian feeling, that led them particularly to devotion to the Virgin; that while in Germany the prayers of the Roman Catholics are directed to the crucifix, to the figure of our Lord upon the cross, it is quite otherwise in Italy, where all the devotion of the people, and all their prayers, are addressed to the pictures and images of Mary; that, however it

was to be accounted for, the fact was so, and that it was increasing, and likely to increase yet more.

I remarked that his words seemed to imply that there was a process of change gradually going on in the Church of Rome in reference to the Virgin, and that thus the religion of Rome was becoming more and more the religion of Mary. I then added that I had seen some remarkable things in a work by St. Alphonso de Liguori. It was entitled "The Glories of Mary," and, among other things, described the vision of St. Bernard, in which he beheld two ladders extending from earth to heaven—two ways by which the sinner could have access to heaven. At the top of one ladder appeared Jesus Christ; at the top of the other ladder appeared the Virgin Mary; and that, while those who endeavored to enter into heaven by the way of Christ's ladder fell constantly back and utterly failed, those, on the other hand, who tried to enter by the ladder of Mary, all succeeded, because she put forth her hands to assist and encourage them. I mentioned, also, that I had seen this as an altar piece in a church at Milan, where the two ladders were represented reaching from earth to heaven; Jesus Christ at the head of one, and Mary at the head of the other; and while none were succeeding by the ladder of Christ, all were succeeding by the ladder of the Virgin! I added that this was degrading Christ in order to exalt the Virgin, and that it was representing her as a more merciful and effectual Savior than the Savior himself! I felt that I could apply no other language to this than that I could not imagine a more hideous blasphemy than the language

of Liguori, or a more frightful sacrilege than such a picture beside the altar of a church.

He said mildly that he could not approve of such things; that such things undoubtedly were often said and often done, but that, for himself, he could not do otherwise than condemn them; that, though he could not go so far as to apply to them such strong language as blasphemy and sacrilege, yet he could not but most strongly disapprove of them; but still he believed they were capable, when rightly interpreted, of being understood in an orthodox and unobjectionable sense.

I then alluded to other pictures of the Virgin Mary, and I reprobated the practice of representing Mary as the chief or principal figure in the picture, and Jesus Christ being introduced as a subordinate figure—as a figure that was merely accessory to hers, a sort of appendage to her, as if he was introduced merely to show that the figure of a female was intended as the figure of Mary—as if, there being innumerable female figures in such pictures, figures of various saints, it was necessary to introduce the child Jesus to show that this female figure was intended for Mary. The figure of St. Catharine is recognized from all others by the introduction of the wheel. The figure of St. Margaret is similarly distinguished by the introduction of a tower. In precisely the same spirit, the figure of Mary is recognized by the introduction of the infant Jesus. But, as with St. Catharine and St. Margaret the wheel and the tower are mere accessories by which they may be recognized, so, in the pictures of Mary, the child Jesus is nothing else than a mere acces-

sory to identify her! I expressed myself strongly against this practice as an awful dishonor to Christ. It was making God the creator a mere secondary to a creature.

He again expressed himself as disapproving of such pictures, saying that, although others approved of and liked them, yet he did not think them altogether justifiable.

I then called his attention to a large number of pictures to be seen in almost every church. They are designed to represent the Virgin Mary *in heaven*, enthroned above the clouds, and encircled by angels and cherubs, and even there she is represented with the infant Jesus in her arms! It could not possibly be that either the artists who paint, or the priests who suspend those pictures over the altar, suppose that Jesus Christ is now an infant still, in the arms of Mary *in heaven*—that He is still an infant *in heaven;* and therefore it is apparent that He is introduced, thus absurdly and improperly, as a mere accessory to distinguish the figure of Mary from the figure of any other saint! I added that there were few things in the Church of Rome that so offended us, as dishonoring to Christ, as this system of making Mary the principal person, and Christ only the secondary person in their pictures. It seemed an index of the state of Italian religion, in which Mary seemed first, and Christ second in prominence, as if it was the religion of Mary rather than the religion of Christ. I added yet further, that it was singular that in the Church of *Gesu e Maria* in the Corso, where the sermons are preached in English for the conversion of the English,

there are no less than three large altar pieces—pictures larger than life—representing the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus *in heaven!*

He said that he quite agreed with me that such things ought not to be; that the representing Mary as enthroned in heaven, and our Lord as a child in her arms, was ignorant, absurd, and untrue—contrary to right teaching; but that, unhappily, there was too much of it. He went on to say that the Church had never done it—never sanctioned it; and although it certainly was done, yet as certainly it was without the sanction or approval of the Church.

I said that the Church had tacitly sanctioned it. It had ever been held that where any doctrine or practice had been propagated, and the Church had not interfered with it or condemned it, that she was then to be regarded as permitting it. I said that in this way the Church tacitly sanctioned the practice; for as these things were not done in a corner, but were done in a large portion of the churches, so they must be known to the authorities and permitted by them. I alluded to a picture of the Virgin in the chapel under St. Peter's, with an inscription that it had miraculously shed blood when struck with a stone; and another picture of the Virgin at Arezzo, which had miraculously shed tears of grief at hearing the profane language of some drunkards; and another picture of her that was shown at Rome, which miraculously wept before the whole congregation at the invasion of the French; and, more strange than all, a picture of the Virgin and child at Lucca, of which it was affirmed that, when some one flung a stone at the face

of the child, she most wonderfully transferred the child to the other arm, and thus saved it from injury—a wonder indeed for a mere picture to perform! I argued that all these, and a thousand similar things, were known to the authorities, and therefore the Church, by permitting them, did tacitly sanction them, and must be held responsible.

He replied by stating that many of these things were undoubtedly untrue, but that many of them were undoubtedly true; that in either case the Church had never given her authority to any of them; that individual priests, and bishops, and even popes believed and sanctioned them, but the Church had never done so. He added that, although they were exhibited in churches, approved by the priests of those churches, and sanctioned by inscriptions on the walls of the churches, yet they were not authorized by the Church. The people might believe or might not believe them, but the Church was not responsible. She left her people at liberty, and the responsibility lay with the priests and people themselves, and not with the Church.

I said, in return, that I was to infer that a belief in such miraculous pictures of the Virgin Mary was not confined to the ignorant of the populace, but was received among the learned and enlightened of the priesthood. His words seemed to imply as much.

He at once replied that he could not answer for others, but that, for himself, he did not believe the greater portion of such narratives; that the Roman Breviary was full of such tales of wonders and miracles, as of men whose heads were cut off, and yet who

afterward took up their own heads and carried them away in their hands! He added, laughing, that he could not believe such things, of which some were unreasonable and foolish, and even known and proved to be false and impossible.

In the Church of S. Stefano Rotundo, among other representations of martyrdom, S. Dionysius is represented as walking in full episcopal robes at the head of a procession, holding his head streaming with blood in his hands! It is said that, after being decapitated, he quietly took up his own head in his hands, and walked away with it, to the no small astonishment of all!

This was as much as I could expect. I pressed him no more on the subject, and soon after our interview ended.

CHAPTER III.

A Visit from a Convert to Romanism—Argument drawn from his Experience of Happiness—Motive to Rest entirely on the Infallibility of the Church—The Infallible Tribunal among Protestants contrasted with that among Romanists—Arguments for Infallibility—The Scriptures—Tradition—The Fathers.

I EXPECTED the promised visit of a reverend gentleman who had originally been a Protestant, and had entered the Church of Rome.

Our conversation commenced, after his arrival, by my observing to him that I understood he had once been a Protestant, and that he had now become a Ro-

man Catholic. I expressed myself as much gratified in making his acquaintance, and being able thus to state my opinions, feelings, and difficulties to one who could understand and appreciate them. I had felt that much and many of the difficulties that pressed upon the mind of an English Protestant were altogether unintelligible to a mind so peculiarly constituted and habituated as that of an Italian Romanist; that it might therefore be feared that my feelings could scarcely be adequately appreciated by our mutual friend, the Padre M——, so as to enlist his sympathies; but that, now that I had to converse with one who had himself been a Protestant, I felt assured that he would understand and sympathize with me.

He replied by stating that he had always, until his arrival at Rome, been a Protestant; that, after a long and painful struggle, he was convinced of the course which it became him to pursue; that he therefore came to Rome, and, after some communication with the Jesuits there, formally renounced his former opinions, and was received as a member of the Church of Rome. He entered into some details of his former history—in fact, the story of his life, and concluded by saying that he had never known peace or happiness until he had taken the final step; and then, and from that moment, he had experienced a tranquillity of mind and a satisfaction of feeling, a joy and delight which he had never known before. Instead of being disturbed in mind, he felt calm; instead of being restless, he had peace; instead of unhappiness, he had full satisfaction; instead of uncertainty, he had the most perfect certainty; and thus, from the moment of his

seeking rest in the bosom of His Holy Mother the Church of Rome, like the wandering child in the bosom of its loving mother, he experienced in her embrace and communion the most perfect happiness. He then added that he believed this happiness was experienced by all who, like him, embraced the Church of Rome; that he knew it to be the experience of others as well as his own; that he could not regard it otherwise than as the special gift and blessing of God—the reward of Heaven to those who entered his true Church; and that, if I took the same step, I should assuredly be partaker of the same reward.

I answered all this by stating that I could well understand it, as I had seen very much of the same nature in the case of persons who had acted in a manner the very opposite to that which he had adopted. I had known many persons, who had been brought up from infancy in all the principles and practices of the Church of Rome, who, by the reading of the Holy Scriptures, or by hearing the preaching of the Gospel, had been led to entertain doubts as to the verity of their former faith, and to receive and adopt the simple and scriptural principles of Protestantism, and so to go on to the final step of embracing the communion of Protestants; and such persons had often told me of the peace of mind and happiness of heart—the gush of joy and delight that they experienced in forsaking by that act what they regarded as the unscriptural and unstable errors of one church for the scriptural and stable truth of the other, speaking with rapturous ecstasy of peace and joy which they had never known before and of the sweetness of which they had previ-

ously had no conception. I added that I supposed this feeling among those who embraced the Roman faith and among those who embraced the Protestant faith—this feeling common to both alike, may arise from the casting aside the doubts and difficulties that had previously occupied and absorbed the mind, but that I could not regard it as a reward or recompense for the final step—that I could not think that God would give this reward to both sides, to the Romanist for embracing Protestantism, and to the Protestant for embracing Romanism.

He said, in return, that he had sometimes heard of such things, and that he was not quite sure whether he ought to doubt or acknowledge them; but that, for himself and his own experience, he could entertain no doubt whatever. For years the conflict had raged within him; principle struggled with principle; one series of apparent truths held conflict with another series of truths equally apparent, till he was tossed to and fro, and reeled like a ship upon the waves, now inclining to Protestantism, and then leaning to Romanism, till he felt all faith giving way, and, to save himself from infidelity, he resolved to embrace the Church of Rome; that, if he had not done so, he must certainly have ended in infidelity; that he had been rushing headlong into that awful abyss, till he was saved by entering the Church of Rome, and from that moment all was peace and joy, every doubt vanished and every difficulty fled away, and all was now tranquillity and happiness. He then assured me that if I would only take the same course; if I would resolve to fling away my doubts and difficulties; if, instead

of making objections, and answering arguments, and requiring reasons and proofs; if, instead of all this, I would but fling them to the winds, and boldly and unhesitatingly enter the Church of Rome, I should escape all the harassing anxieties of doubt, and all the awfulness of infidelity, and receive my reward in the peacefulness and tranquillity of soul which he had himself experienced, and which it was absolutely impossible I could ever experience otherwise; for that I must else continue in doubt and difficulty, and that my doubts must increase, and my difficulty become still more difficult, and my whole mind become so mystified, and perplexed, and entangled, that I must end in infidelity. There was no escape but in the Church of Rome.

I could not but smile, while I thanked him for his anxiety about my doubts and difficulties; and I assured him that I had never any doubt or difficulty as to the truth of all required of me as a member of the Church of England; that the only doubts and difficulties of which I was conscious had reference, not to the Church of England, but to the Church of Rome; that, residing as I then was in the city of Rome, the seat of that Church, I was forced to consider whether I could hold communion with her; that, having been invited to join myself to her, I felt doubts and difficulties of so cogent a nature, in my judgment, to such a step, that I had not done so; and that I never could do so, unless my objections to the Church of Rome were fully removed. I added that my previous communications with Padre M—— arose from his proposal that I should freely state my objections, and thus give him an opportunity of answering and removing them.

He replied by saying that he had been under a mistake, but that it need not affect our communications, as he could quite understand and enter into my feelings on the point, the more so as he had himself had long and sad experience of the same state of mind; that he had indeed been bitterly tried and sadly perplexed by difficulties, by prejudices, and by distastes; that he was conscious of a feeling amounting to repugnance and loathing of some things, and seemingly an impossibility of believing others; that in all these he had probably felt as many and as great difficulties as those which now stood in my way, and opposed my union with the Church of Rome; and that, if he had listened to them, and continued to argue them out, as I seemed disposed to do, he should probably have continued a Protestant to the present day, or rather, as he immediately corrected himself, he should probably have become an infidel, for he had brought himself to that pass that he had reasoned himself into the belief that the Church or religion of Rome seemed to him more natural, more reasonable, more consistent, and better put together than the Church or religion of Christ, so far as it could be gathered from the Scriptures, and thus he must become either a Catholic or an infidel, embracing the Church of Rome or none at all. He continued to say that my only as well as my most comfortable course was to fling aside all my mental difficulties, no longer to debate or argue the objections, but, remembering they had all been already decided by the infallible authority of the Church, dismiss them forever from my mind; that he had himself felt the advantage and comfort of this, for that a doubt on

any point—as, for example, on Transubstantiation—never crossed his mind. Whatever difficulties might exist, they never troubled him now, for he laid them all on the tribunal which had already infallibly decided them.

I said, in reply to all this, that I could well understand such a course as an easy and effectual way of disposing of some difficulties, and that I had long been in the habit of acting on it. I fully felt the value, and, indeed, the necessity, for a tribunal—an infallible tribunal, to determine the religious difficulties of my mind, and I knew and felt they could not be satisfactorily and safely determined by mere human authority, my mind being so constituted as to require the decision of Divine authority to satisfy it, and that I therefore felt the necessity of referring all to an infallible authority.

My friend seemed to accept this as all he required, and was about to proceed with his argument, when I continued to say that I had found and felt that the Holy Scriptures were the Word of God; that they were inspired by Him, and therefore were infallible; that, being of Divine, and not mere human authority, they were an infallible tribunal, to whose decisions our difficulties should be referred; that, by God's grace and mercy, my mind was completely subdued and submissive to them; so subdued and submissive, that, no matter how opposed to previous convictions any statement might be, yet if only it was clearly maintained or justified by the Holy Scriptures, I at once bowed to it as of Divine and infallible authority. I added that the difference between him and me was, that he

bowed to a supposed authority, the inspiration and divinity of which I denied, while I bowed to an authority whose inspiration and divinity was admitted by all. He yielded to the decisions of the papal bulls, while I bowed to the decisions of the Holy Scriptures.

His answer to this was precisely what I had anticipated. He acknowledged that, in appealing to the Holy Scriptures, the Protestants appealed to that which must be recognized as an infallible tribunal, but that he objected to the practical inutility of the Holy Scriptures to such a purpose, as unfitted and inadequate to the wants of the Church. He argued that this unfitness and inadequacy arose from their liability to a variety of interpretations on the part of a variety of persons; that if ten men could be produced united on one interpretation, he could produce ten more insisting upon some opposite or different one, and neither had right or authority to say the other was wrong; and thence he argued that this liability to a diversity of interpretation was a fatal objection to the fitness or adequacy of the Holy Scriptures for the determination of controversies or the solution of difficulties.

I rejoined to this, that although the argument has often before been urged in many works of controversy, yet it had never seemed to me to have weight in the matter for which it was adduced, because the very same objection, in all its force, was as applicable to the system of the Church of Rome. If appeal be made to the canon law; if reference be made to the writings of the primitive fathers; if the appeal be made to the decrees of councils; if the reference be

made to the bulls of popes; if, in short, it be made to any documents supposed to contain the infallible mind of the Church, there will be found as great a diversity of interpretation as if the reference be made to the Holy Scriptures. They all have been and still are as liable to diversity of interpretation as the Holy Scriptures; so that, if he could produce ten men for one interpretation, I could produce ten more for a different interpretation; and for every ten Roman Catholic authors whom he might adduce as teaching infallibility as residing in the popes and not in the councils, I could adduce ten others teaching that infallibility resides in the councils and not in the popes. And I argued, that if a liability to a diversity of interpretation or variety of opinion were an adequate objection to the Holy Scriptures as the final tribunal of appeal in questions of religion, then a similar liability must be an adequate objection against the writings of the fathers, the canons of Rome, the decrees of councils, or the bulls of popes. They all were liable to diversity of interpretation and variety of opinion.

He acknowledged frankly and at once that he thought my answer was sufficient, so far as those writings, canons, decrees, and bulls, that have been already passed or written, are concerned. They are now written documents, and, as such, they necessarily become liable to various interpretations in the hands of able and subtle men. They are all, therefore, in the same category, and liable to the same objection as the Holy Scriptures. He would fully admit all this. But he thought that the great advantage of the Church of Rome consisted in having one

who, as the head of the Church, was a living and speaking Judge, who could at any moment determine infallibly the question under debate; and that it was better to refer such question to the infallible decision of the pope, as head of the Church, than to the Holy Scriptures, which every disputant would interpret as suited his purpose. He then went on to speak of the comfort of being able to fling away the mental difficulties and intellectual doubtings with which some minds were oppressed, stating how he had felt it in his own experience, and that I could never know the end of such difficulties and doubtings until, like him, I resolved to cast them all aside, and lay the responsibility of all the right or wrong, all the truth or error connected with them, on the infallibility of this infallible authority. And he concluded by saying, in very complimentary terms, that as my mind was an inquiring one, and also a logical one, it was the more necessary for me to take this course, as it was evident, from the very character of my mind, that I must end in infidelity if I did not embrace Catholicity.

I thanked him with all courtesy for the complimentary terms in which he was pleased to describe the character of my mind, and I earnestly begged that he would accept the inquiring and logical nature of my mind in apology for pressing so much for proofs and evidences before I received any important statement. The character of my mind required proofs, and must be my excuse to him for asking what proof, what evidence, what argument he could adduce, on which he would ask me to believe in the existence of any infallible tribunal on earth other and besides the

Holy Scriptures. I observed that he had repeatedly asserted the existence of such infallible tribunal; that he had offered it to me as a panacea or remedy for all my difficulties; that he pressed it as a resolver of all my objections to the Church of Rome; that he avowed it as the basis of all his faith as touching eternity; and that he presented the whole system of his religion, his faith and hope, and the important step of embracing the Church of Rome, as founded upon one point, namely, that there was a living and speaking infallible tribunal on earth other and besides the Holy Scriptures. I therefore asked with all earnestness and solemnity, As you say my mind is a logical one, so you will believe that my mind requires a clear, cogent, unanswerable proof of the actual existence of such a tribunal; and I therefore ask, On what evidence, proof, or argument, do you present it to me? You say that all—Catholicity, Protestantism, infidelity, depend on the reception or rejection of it. Heaven and hell depend on it. It requires a strong foundation, for it has much to carry.

He assented to this, and said he would at once enter on the question. He then proceeded to say that one argument for the existence of this tribunal was *Necessity.* He referred to the variety of opinions that agitate and distract the Church; to the conflicting elements which characterize the different sects; to the difficulties that beset the pathway of every inquirer; to the doubts and conflicts that perpetually oppress the minds of thinking men; to the difficulties apparently, perhaps really, insurmountable, that surround some minds—he referred to these as creating a

necessity for some tribunal. He said the minds of men were in doubt, and an infallible tribunal is *necessary* to resolve those doubts; that there are diversities of opinions as to faith and practice agitating various sections of the Church, and an infallible tribunal is *necessary* to decide between them; that there were sects and schisms innumerable, all maintaining opposite doctrines, and an infallible tribunal is *necessary* to determine and settle all. He thus based his argument on the supposed necessity.

To this I replied by saying that in the Holy Scriptures we possess that which all Christian churches regarded as the word of God, and therefore infallible, and that the necessity of which he spoke was thus fully provided for. We have in them an infallible tribunal, and we see no necessity for any other, and especially such a one as decrees of councils or bulls of popes, which are often directly contradictory and opposed to one another, and all of which are liable to diversity of interpretation as much as the Holy Scripture, so that we gain nothing by leaving the Scriptures and flying to them. I then added that he had assumed a necessity for some infallible tribunal, and I appealed to him, asking whether, as a logician, he was satisfied with his own argument; whether it was good logic or sound reasoning to say that there are diversities of opinion, and *therefore* there is a necessity for an infallible tribunal, and *therefore* there is such a tribunal; whether such a syllogism could be used in the College of Nobles, of which he was a tutor; where was the *vis consequentiæ* by which he could conclude the existence of a thing from the im-

aginary necessity or convenience of the thing. I asked whether, as a logician, he really thought that so important a point as the existence of an infallible tribunal was sufficiently demonstrated by a mere opinion of the great convenience or necessity for it in the present state of the Church; and I asked further, whether, as a Christian, he would think me justified in placing all my faith on that which seemed so inadequately proved.

He paused some time before he replied. It appeared to me, as I observed him, that he was struggling with himself, as if he felt that the answer he was about to give was other than he wished. His manner was different from the confidence and self-possession he had previously shown. After some moments, he smiled good-humoredly at his own argument, as it seemed to me, and he frankly stated that it did not satisfy himself; that he could not defend the logic of it; and that, of course, the argument must go for nothing; adding freely, and with a good-humored smile, that he thought I should not be justified in changing my religious views upon such grounds.

I could not, after so frank an admission on his part, press further on the point; but I asked him whether he could advance any further and more satisfactory argument, reminding him that he had asked me to cast aside all my reasonings, my doubtings, my difficulties, and my objections, and to lay the solution and responsibility of all on the infallible tribunal; and that the argument ought therefore to be logical, clear, cogent, and unanswerable.

He answered by saying that he could prove its ex-

istence from the usefulness and convenience of such a tribunal—so useful and convenient that we must suppose a good and beneficent God must have granted it to the Church. He then repeated his former statement, touching similarly on the doubts, the divisions, the conflicts, the sects of the Church; and he argued that an infallible tribunal would be so desirable, so advantageous, so consistent with the goodness and beneficence of God, in order to remedy these evils in the Church, that God may well be supposed to have established a tribunal so useful and convenient.

I asked him quietly, Do you yourself think that your proving it to be convenient, or useful, or desirable for the Church is really proving that it does exist in the Church? Do you yourself think that in logic you are justified in inferring the existence of any thing from the supposed usefulness of the thing?

He at once and with the utmost candor admitted that his argument had so far failed, that I should not be justified in believing the existence of an infallible tribunal on the grounds he had stated. He seemed perplexed, as if unprepared to enter further on the argument, or as if he had never before considered the point with sufficient care. I was much surprised at his apparent confusion, and could not well understand his being so unprepared on so important a question.

I added, however, that the supposed convenience and usefulness of an infallible tribunal was the argument most generally urged in its behalf—the argument usually unfolded in writing, and urged in conversation, at least so far as my personal experience extended, so that it seemed to me to be the main ba-

sis or foundation of this important matter; and that I really was unable to understand how thinking and earnest men could hazard all their faith and hope, and peril all the destinies of eternity, on a principle founded, as it seemed to my poor judgment, on so frail and inadequate a basis. I felt myself that I could not do so. It would, I acknowledged, undoubtedly be very convenient and useful for us, that hell, with all its horrors, should be annihilated, but we are not justified in believing, therefore, that hell is annihilated. It would also, without any question, be useful and convenient for us, beyond expression, that sin should be abolished and driven from the world, but we are not therefore to infer that sin is so abolished. The annihilation of hell, and the abolition of our liability to sin, would be an act that in our eyes might seem very consistent with the goodness, and compassion, and beneficence of God, but we are not thence to infer that He has annihilated the one or abolished the other. And in the same way, I continued, our proving the convenience or usefulness of an infallible tribunal other and besides the Holy Scriptures, or its suitableness to the goodness of God, can not be regarded as any adequate argument to prove that God has actually established it. The question is, not what God could or might have done, but what he has done.

The conversation now assumed a most unexpected phase. He frankly and at once, and with no little emotion, acknowledged that his arguments had failed; that my answer was sufficient to set it aside; that his argument was illogical, and that, at the best, all he had urged could not prove the matter before us as

so important a point required to be proved. All this was confessed so frankly, so unhesitatingly, and with so much evident earnestness as it seemed to me, that I was quite taken by surprise. I began to imagine that perhaps his own belief in an infallible tribunal was shaking, and that, as he so fully surrendered the foundations on which he had built it, he might be disposed to forsake the whole structure itself.

I paused for some moments to give him time to draw his own conclusions, and at least to collect his thoughts, for he seemed confused by the position in which he unexpectedly found himself. After a while I asked, What further argument can you adduce to demonstrate the existence of this infallible tribunal?

He answered, "Really I do not just now recollect any other. I thought that these would have been enough."

I said, "But how do you prove to your own mind —how do you at this moment satisfy your own mind as to the existence of this infallible tribunal?"

He replied, "I have always assumed it—I have always assumed it—I have always taken it for granted, without further consideration."

He spoke this with much emotion. I felt for him, for he seemed both confused and humbled; and I would not have pressed him further, only that I felt I had perhaps a duty to discharge—a duty to the truth of God, and a duty to himself, by endeavoring to strengthen any doubts that might possibly have been raised in his mind. I therefore addressed him with much earnestness, and in all the kindness of holy brotherhood, reminding him how he had some mo-

ments before told me that he had abandoned Protestant principles—forsaken the faith of his fathers—given up the creed and religion of his youth, and embraced the whole system of the Church of Rome; that he had cast all his difficulties, and doubts, and objections at the foot of this infallible tribunal, and had done despite to his former convictions, and done violence to his judgment, and had done so in submissive obedience to the decisions of this supposed tribunal; I reminded him, also, of his having invited me to follow his example, to cease reasoning, to waive objections, to fling all aside, and change my church—my religion, and stake all the interests of time and the destinies of eternity upon the credit of this infallible tribunal of the Church of Rome, of whose existence or reality he was obliged to acknowledge he had no adequate proof.

He replied, with great feeling, "The truth is, I have always assumed it. It never occurred to me in this light before. I have never further questioned it. I have always assumed it."

All this portion of our conversation was marked by great emotion on his part, and I felt it difficult to account for it. My opinions of the controversial skill and acumen of the Jesuits made me suspect that he was only playing a part to throw me off my guard, and lead me to express my real hostility to the Church of Rome. I could not understand how a man trained in all the intrigues and subtleties of the College of the Jesuits, and specially selected to argue with and answer my objections, could have broken down so soon and so easily; and I was therefore undecided as to

the character of his emotion. Whether it was the natural emotion of a controversialist, who felt himself foiled when he anticipated an easy victory, or whether it was the emotion of one who had periled his all for time and eternity upon a position which he now felt to be untenable, I was at a loss to determine. Perhaps it was not for me to form any opinion. The Lord judgeth the heart. I only know that he expressed himself with great earnestness and emotion, repeatedly placing his hand on his forehead and repeating the words, "I have always assumed it, I have always taken it for granted." I did not interrupt the train of his thoughts, whatever they were, but left him under the guidance of Him who could direct and order all his thoughts to the highest and holiest ends. I felt, however, that if my friend was sincere, his belief in the Church of Rome was already shaken in its most vital part.

Some visitors were at this moment announced, and our conversation was interrupted for a short time. During the pause he seemed to be collecting his thoughts and recovering himself, and as my object in all my communication with him and others was not so much to overthrow his positions and refute his arguments as to draw him out so as to learn quietly and unsuspiciously all he and they had to offer in behalf of the system of Romanism—as this was my object, learning thus the mode of reasoning and seduction practiced on English Protestants, I resumed the subject, and asked him whether he felt satisfied with merely assuming the existence of an infallible tribunal.

He then said, We can prove its existence, or, rather,

we may assume its existence without proof, in the same way as we assume the existence of God without proof. No man, he continued, can prove the existence of God. It is incapable of proof. Instead of proving it, we always assume it; and in the same way we need not prove the existence of an infallible tribunal, but may assume it without proof.

I replied, that we never assumed the existence of God except with those who admitted and believed it; that I could not speak of the practice in the university and schools of theology of Rome, but that I could answer for the universities and schools of theology in England, where they would never assume the existence of God unless with those who believed and acknowledged it. But with the infidels we argued from the things created to Him who created them. Every thing which we see or know has a beginning, and this is not a thing assumed, but a matter of every man's experience. Every created thing, of which we have any experimental knowledge, has or has had a beginning. It must be the result of some cause, and that the result of some previous cause, and that, again, the result of some still precedent cause; but still, however unseen, or distant, or untraceable the various links in the chain of cause and effect, there can be no result without a cause, and, consequently, a First Cause, and this First Cause we call God. Instead, therefore, of assuming the existence of the first cause, we prove it. If the existence of an infallible tribunal on earth be parallel to this, it should be proved as clearly.

He at once acknowledged that the cases were not

analogous, and he said that he could prove his position from the Scriptures. He observed me smiling at this, and he good-humoredly smiled in return, saying that he feared we could not arrive at any conclusion from them, as we should be sure to adopt different interpretations of each place, and that it was necessary we should commence with some point on which we were agreed, and so argue from it; that the Scriptures were utterly useless for such a purpose, inasmuch as we could not agree amid the variety of interpretations; that they were always appealed to by all parties, and so could really decide nothing satisfactorily, and therefore he suggested that we were agreed on "the Apostles' Creed," and could argue from it.

I said that as he would not argue from the Holy Scriptures on the ground of there being different interpretations or explanations of each place, I feared that there might be the same objection to the Apostles' Creed, as we were as likely to differ in our interpretation or explanation of it. But I added that I would be glad to hear him on the subject.

He argued from the words, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," saying that the words implied that the Catholic Church was one; that there was a oneness or unity in it; that there were not many, but one; that this oneness or unity required that it should have only one head, to give utterance to the sentiments of the Church; and that this one head must be the seat of infallibility, as otherwise the Church would become divided instead of united, and many instead of one.

I could not but smile at this reasoning, and wondered where the *vis consequentiæ* was to be found. I said, however, in reply, that it was the belief of all Protestants that the Church was one in Christ; that it had not many, but one head in Christ; that it knew and imagined only one infallible expression of truth, namely, the Holy Scripture; and then I asked him, When you say that the Church, being one, must have one mouth-piece to utter her sentiments, where is the *vis consequentiæ?* And when you say that there being this one mouth-piece proves the existence of an infallible tribunal, where is the *vis consequentiæ?* I appealed to him as one practiced in the system of the schools, practiced in the system of reasoning by syllogism, whether such reasoning was admissible, and whether he could justly draw such an inference from my believing that Christ has a holy and universal Church—a "Holy Catholic Church."

He exhibited on this, as indeed all through our previous conversation, the same apparent candor as if he was conversing upon a topic on which he felt indifferent, and not at all as if he sought or contemplated my conversion to Romanism. He acknowledged that his argument from the words of the creed, "the Holy Catholic Church," was inconclusive and unsatisfactory, not calculated to convince; I therefore asked him whether he thought he could prove his position by any other process.

He replied by saying that he thought he should be able to prove that the existence of an infallible tribunal was not inconsistent with Scripture, or with history, or with tradition, or with reason.

I said that could not satisfy me, as the existence of the tribunal must first be proved. Its existence must first be established, and then its consistency or inconsistency with these may be in a way of being debated. I therefore again asked him to prove it.

He then said that he did not at that moment recollect any further argument.

I then reminded him that he had frankly admitted that he had failed in each of the arguments he had already adduced; that he had withdrawn every one of them, so that we were still as we were at the beginning; so I asked him for some new and additional argument.

He said that he had advanced all he had recollected; that he had thought that these would have sufficed, but that he must admit that he had failed.

I then asked, Am I to understand that you forsook your Protestant principles, and laid all your scruples, and objections, and difficulties—and you have told me they were many and great—at the feet of this infallible tribunal, when, as you now admit, you have had no conclusive and satisfactory argument to prove even the existence of such a tribunal? Have you not taken a step of tremendous importance on very inadequate grounds—grounds that certainly do not justify a course of such overwhelming importance?

He replied thoughtfully as before. "I have always assumed it, I have always taken it for granted."

I then again asked him whether it was possible he could not produce any stronger proof for the existence of this infallible authority in the Church of Rome, since it was the position on which he based all his

professed belief, that it was the ground on which he asked me to change my Church and faith, and that it ought, therefore, to be established by clear, and cogent, and irrefragable arguments. A man ought not to change his religion or Church on slight grounds. I said that I was indifferent to the common arguments on the subject, as they were in all controversial works, and might there be read by every one; but that I should be glad, and that I was anxious, to hear what those arguments were which were still influencing his own mind. He had professed a belief in this infallible authority; I asked him on what grounds he then believed in it.

He answered at once, He had always been in the habit of assuming it. He had never questioned it, or thought of it in the way in which it had now been considered. A belief in it had been habitual with him. He had always taken it as proved, and he had never questioned it; but, he added, thoughtfully, after a pause, "I must consider the subject—I must reconsider it."

The tone and manner in which this fell from him made me pause. The well-known character of all connected with the order of the Jesuits made me wonder at the want of talent, subtlety, and argument so apparent in the part he had taken in this conversation. I had been prepared to see an able, ingenious, and perhaps profound controversialist. I had anticipated this from all I had ever read and heard of the Jesuits, and especially those who were selected to deal with the Anglican clergy, and I was conscious of feeling some degree of trepidation in the prospect of

measuring lances with such opponents. But here was a man withdrawing his arguments, confessing their inadequacy and invalidity, and acknowledging that he had only habitually assumed the existence of infallibility in the Church of Rome! I was very far from being prepared for this; and, I must candidly confess it, I did not believe the sincerity of it. It had frequently occurred to me, that as he had once been a Protestant—as he seemed from some things that dropped from him, as to his private affairs and his past life, to feel himself under more control at Rome than he liked—he would readily avail himself of a good excuse of again changing his religion and Church, and would fly to England if encouragement and support were insured to him. This idea had several times occurred to my wife and myself, especially to her, to whom he had spoken much as to his private history, so that I thought at some moments that he either could not consciously or would not willingly maintain his argument against me: I felt perplexed. I sometimes thought that he might be a very honest, but misguided and untaught man, who had never fairly considered the matter, and was now for the first time opening his eyes; and then, again, I feared it might be the *ruse* of some subtle and accomplished Jesuit, endeavoring by this appearance of candor to throw me off my guard, and thus ascertain whether my real object was to consider these questions, or to attempt to raise doubts in the minds of the priests at Rome. I felt that if I gave them reason to suppose that I was making any attempt at proselytizing, I should immediately be ordered by the

police to leave Rome, and I therefore found it difficult to determine how to deal with him. I resolved at last to be silent. I felt that enough had been said to make an honest man reflect, and that, if he were only playing the Jesuit with me, my best course was the appearance of indifference, in order to foil his purpose. I therefore turned from the subject, and did not again revert to any thing theological for some time.

After a conversation upon several topics connected with our friends at Rome, I resumed our subject.

I said we had argued hitherto only as to the existence of an infallible tribunal, and there was a further point on which I was anxious for information, and would be glad to know his opinion; I alluded to the locality or residence of this infallibility. I said the point presented considerable difficulties to my mind. I did not know where to find it. If once I left the Holy Scriptures, I did not know where to go; and even assuming that an infallible tribunal existed *somewhere*, I yet could not avail myself of it, for I knew not where to find it—in the fathers—in tradition—in councils—in popes—in the Church diffused —I knew not where or to whom I should go. Now, assuming its existence somewhere, I asked his opinion as to whether it could be found in the writings of the fathers.

His answer was, Certainly not.

I said that in this I agreed with him; that I had read a good deal of their writings; that some of them were undoubtedly master-minds; that there were some beautiful things in them, but that there were also many things of a very different character—in-

deed, highly objectionable; some things wrong, some things puerile, some things in one father opposed to other fathers, and even some parts of the same father opposed to other portions of his own writings, so that, on the whole, they seemed to me a very mistaken and uncertain authority, on which no thinking man could depend.

He answered by stating his entire concurrence in this sentiment, saying frankly that he had not read much of the fathers, but that, from what he had read, with the exception of St. Augustine, there seemed to him much of weakness, much of puerilities, much of positive error, though, at the same time, mixed with much talent, piety, and learning, but certainly unworthy of the position in which some theologians seemed disposed to place them; and, whatever good was in their writings, they were wholly unfit for the uses to which some would apply them, as authoritative interpreters of Scripture, or, indeed, as authoritative on any question of theology.

I expressed myself as glad that we were so far agreed, and could thus lay aside the fathers, adding that they themselves justified and recommended our doing so by the manner in which they treated one another, confuting and opposing one another.

He added that St. Augustine had said that he would not believe any thing merely on the ground that it had been taught by any number of fathers; that, as such, the fathers had no authority with St. Augustine; "and why," he asked, "why should they have authority with us?"

I perceived that we were agreed thus far, and I

therefore added that the fathers not only rejected each other's authority, but also the authority of councils and churches, and demanded submission to the Holy Scriptures, pointing to them, as is usual among Protestants, as to the only seat of infallible truth.

He quickly contradicted me in this, and said that the fathers did not reject the decisions of councils or churches.

I was prepared for this, and replied by saying, I would let St. Augustine speak for himself; and opening a volume which I had purposely with me, read the following passage from that father: "I ought not to adduce the Council of Nice, nor ought you to adduce the council of Ariminum, for I am not bound by the authority of one, nor are you bound by the authority of the other. Let the question be determined by the authority of the Scriptures, which are witnesses peculiar to neither of us, but common to both." (Con. Max., 3, c. 14.) I said this was a very clear rejection of the authority of councils, the more remarkable as the Council of Nice was one of them.

He remarked that he had not recollected the passage.

I then called his attention to another, where St. Augustine says, "We do not say that you ought to believe us, that we are in the Church, because Optatus or Ambrose have praised the Church which we hold, nor because other innumerable bishops of our communion have done the same, nor because our Church has been proclaimed by councils of our colleagues, nor because wonderful miracles of hearing and healing have been wrought in those places where our communion is frequented;" and a little afterward

he adds, "Laying aside all such arguments, let them prove their Church if they can, not in the discourses or reports of the Africans, nor in the councils of their bishops, nor in the writings of any controversialist whatever, nor by miracles and wonders, which are liable to deceit, and against which we have been forewarned and cautioned by the words of our Lord, but let them prove it in the law, in the predictions of the prophets, in the songs of the Psalmist, in the words of the Shepherd himself, in the preaching and labors of the evangelists, that is, in all the canonical authorities of the sacred volume." I added, that in these passages from St. Augustine's treatise *De Unitate* (c. 16), he seems to reject the authority of fathers, councils, and churches, and appeals only to the Holy Scriptures; and "why," I asked, "why should not we follow his example, and examine our different doctrines by the Holy Scriptures, which we acknowledge to be infallible, instead of appealing to any thing else?"

He replied that he could not go with me in appealing to the Scriptures, as the variety of interpretation to which they were liable would be an insuperable difficulty; and that, while he had not distinctly recollected those passages in St. Augustine, yet he had a perfect recollection of that father's expressing himself very differently elsewhere; that he recollected a passage in which St. Augustine expresses himself as willing to submit to any thing the bishops required, or which their predecessors enjoined, or the councils desired, or the Church demanded; that it belonged to them to possess and exercise authority, and that it was our province to submit and obey; that, whether the

things were in Scripture or not, if only the bishop or the Church desired it, it was for us to submit and obey. Such was the opinion of St. Augustine, founding the practice of infant baptism on the simple ground of its being ordered, not by Scripture, but by the Church, and stating that any resistance to the authority of the bishop or the Church was an act of rebellion. He added that, though he did not recollect at the moment where those opinions of St. Augustine were, he yet had a perfect recollection of having read them in his writings.

I said that I quite believed such sentiments were to be found in the writings of that father, and that I could myself fully enter into them; that they seemed to me to relate to the ordinary canons, ceremonies, &c., referring to the right conduct of Church matters, which are not touched in Holy Scriptures, and which must be left to the authority of the Church and its officials to arrange. But I added, "If you refer this language to matters of doctrine and faith, I can not go with you, and the conclusion at which we must arrive is this, namely, that as there are different passages in the writings of St. Augustine expressing different and opposite opinions—as not only one father can be cited against another father, but as, in this instance, a father can be cited against himself—the most reasonable course would be to lay them altogether aside, and certainly not to appeal to them as an infallible tribunal."

To this he assented, and even went further, saying that they never were fitted for being an authority in controversies; that they frequently contradicted and controverted each other; that they often retracted and

confuted themselves and their own writings; that many of them held positive error; that, though some were saints, there were others who were not saints; and that the writings of the fathers had been made too much of by some theologians, being often too erroneous, too fanciful, and too puerile to secure the respect which was frequently paid to them. For himself, he added that he certainly could not be influenced by them.

I then asked where, as I must not look to the fathers, he would direct me in searching for an infallible authority. Whether he would refer me to tradition?

He replied promptly and earnestly, "Most certainly not. Tradition is not a safe or infallible guide."

I expressed myself pleased at finding we were thus far agreed, for that, though I had a profound respect for tradition in all that was within its proper and peculiar province, I yet could not ascribe to it a shadow of authority in matters necessary to salvation.

He said that he quite assented to this, and agreed with me thus far as to all that was purely traditionary; for although the words which the apostles preached were quite as authoritative and inspired, and therefore infallible, as the words which the apostles wrote, yet there was not the same certainty about them. We were not so sure of their identity. Words spoken were too fugitive. The *littera scripta* was preferable.

I said that he had just expressed the feeling I always entertained on the subject of tradition; for, admitting that the apostles' *preached word* was quite as authoritative as the apostles' *written word*, yet we were not so sure that we possess the former—we are not sure that many things are not palmed on them which

they never uttered; that many errors are not fathered on them which were never begotten by them; that that which was purely traditionary was universally regarded by all acquainted with historical research as essentially uncertain; that, consequently, I was unable to hold any thing as necessary to be believed in order to salvation which was derived only through ecclesiastical tradition; and that, even if more credible than it is, it still would remain too vague and uncertain for any inquiring or thinking person to refer to it, or depend on it as an infallible tribunal.

He stated broadly and strongly that he felt very much with me, and that tradition, notwithstanding all that was said of it, could never govern his mind. He felt it was altogether too vague—too uncertain—so diverse at different ages and in different countries, that he could not understand why it had been made so much of in these controversies. He spoke freely of our divines at Oxford—those whose tendencies were toward the Church of Rome, as exhibited in the "Tracts for the Times," in the "Ideal of a Church," in the "Sermon on Tradition," &c., and thought they had made a great mistake in making so much of tradition as they affected to do; that it really had not helped them, except among those ignorant of what tradition really was; that it had rather raised in many minds suspicions and prejudices against them and their object; that he deeply regretted and deplored that men who might have turned the whole Church of England, and brought all the people of England nearer to the Church of Rome, and even into her arms, had lost so noble an opportunity by exposing their good cause, by making

so much of tradition; that many of them, in their zeal without knowledge, had acted with the utmost imprudence in their mode of treating the subject; that they ought to have known that tradition could never be established; that it could easily be shaken; that it was variable, and uncertain, and debatable in itself; that, with calm minds, it could never decide other questions. He dwelt long on this point, and concluded by saying that he fully agreed with me that there was no infallibility in tradition, although the whole history of the Church, he added, gave evidence that an infallibility existed.

I felt that we had now arrived at an important point in this our conference, and my heart was full of thankfulness that the Spirit of all truth had thus far prospered me, and given what I thought some measure of success. It was clear that an appeal to the writings of the fathers and to tradition was abandoned, and by mutual consent rejected. I felt myself, in this, disencumbered of much trouble, which I had feared would have been in my way if he had required of me to enter on that large branch of controversy which he thus readily abandoned as untenable; and I was, at the same time, fearful of being led to express myself in any terms that might awaken his suspicions or alarm him. I feared to say or do any thing that might awaken in his mind a suspicion that I was desiring to create doubts in his mind, and to attempt to proselytize him, or even to lead him to think that I was not merely seeking for information, and to clear my own views, and to learn some answer to my objections, and to have my difficulties removed, but that I was also play-

ing and tampering with him. I much feared creating such an impression as would lead him to think I was incorrigible as a Protestant, and altogether beyond his hopes of conversion, which would have led to his withdrawal from all further intercourse with me. I was therefore very thankful to find myself freed from all strife or difference about the fathers and tradition, and thus disencumbered of a great source of uneasiness. He evidently felt that he could not safely rely on any argument derived from either of these sources, and thus easily abandoned them.

I soon again took the opportunity of reminding him that, at the beginning of our conversation, he had urged me to lay aside all my objections, and difficulties, and doubts as to transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, the worship of Mary, and other points, and at once to enter the Church of Rome, laying all these doubts, &c., at the foot of infallibility, which had already resolved and settled them. I said that I should now ask him to show me this infallible tribunal; to tell me where it exists—where I may find it, and avail myself of it. There may be, I said to him, a physician able to heal my sickness of the body, but if I know not where to find him, his skill will remain useless to me, and my sickness remains unhealed; and, in the same way, supposing that this infallible tribunal exists *somewhere* for the solution of my doubts, it will remain utterly useless unless I know where to find it, in order to avail myself of it and cast my difficulties at its feet. Where is it?

He answered that it was in the Church, speaking by its infallible head—the pope.

I said that I had always heard that it was *somewhere* in the Church, but that men differed in the Church of Rome as to the precise *somewhere*. One class of her theologians holds that infallibility resides in the popes; a second class maintains that it resides in a council; and a third class asserts that it is not in either of these separately or in both conjointly, but that it resides diffused through the Church generally. I added that these several classes of theologians always seemed to me to argue very ably in proving that their adversaries are wrong, but to reason very weakly and defectively when endeavoring to establish their own views; and I therefore expressed a wish to learn to which of these systems his judgment inclined.

He answered my inquiry by saying that the French divines held that infallibility resides in general councils, and not in the popes; that the Italian divines hold that it resides in the popes, and not in councils; and that the ancient Catholics of England used to side with the Italians in favor of the popes, but that the modern Catholics of that island have passed over to the opinions of the French in favor of councils. He added, for himself, that he held it was in the popes.

I said, in reference to his own views, that I rather coincided with him, not, indeed, in thinking that infallibility existed any where but in the Holy Scriptures, which were inspired of God, and therefore infallible, but that, if it could exist any where else—in any of the three seats or parties to which we had referred, the preponderance of argument seemed to me to be decidedly in favor of the papacy. Most of their arguments, I said, seemed to me to be derived from

something connected with St. Peter—derived from some word spoken to him, or some promise made to him, or some supremacy supposed to be in him; and, therefore, they all seemed to me to point to something in the popes as succeeding him, rather than to any thing in councils.

He expressed himself as much pleased and gratified at finding I agreed with him on that point, as it was one on which his order—that of the Jesuits—held very decided opinions.

I then said, that though my impression was that in the question of councils, bishops, and popes, the arguments rather inclined in favor of the claim of the popes, yet, supposing that point settled, and all difficulty thereon removed from my mind, there was a further difficulty immediately called into existence, namely, how it was to be ascertained when the pope delivered himself infallibly. It was admitted, I said, by all parties, that some popes had erred—that some were heretical—and that, with orthodox popes, they sometimes spoke fallibly and sometimes infallibly. There are many papal bulls, delivered *ex cathedrâ* of course, which were directly opposite and contradictory to other papal bulls, also delivered *ex cathedrâ;* and, under these admitted circumstances, the difficulty pressing on my mind would be the means or test by which I could distinguish between the fallible bulls and the infallible bulls.

He replied that that was a very difficult part of our inquiries, and that he thought it would be advisable for me to have a conference or meeting with the professor of canon law; that he was one of the order

of the Jesuits; that he was, from the nature of his professorship, peculiarly competent to give me information on that precise point; that he was very learned and talented, and had paid great attention to that department of ecclesiastical matters; and, finally, that in a few days he should arrange for a conversation on the subject, informing the reverend professor of my difficulties, that he might be prepared beforehand to give all information and satisfaction to my inquiries.

Soon after this, with friendly and mutual expressions of a hope that we might again soon meet to speak for our mutual edification on these deeply interesting matters, we parted.

CHAPTER IV.

The Death of a Convert—Administration of Five Sacraments—Prayer through Mary heard sooner than through Christ—Argument from Experience—The Madonna of the Augustinians—The Means by which Saints hear Prayers—God a Mediator to the Saints—Opinions of St. Chrysostom—The Influence of the Worship of Mary—Mary more Compassionate than Christ.

It was not many days after the preceding interview that another priest of the Church of Rome called on us. He was a man of considerable attainments, and singularly accomplished in some particulars. He held a position of great influence in the Church, and his learning and character added yet more, if possible, to the influence derived from his station. He came with the frank avowal of his object, namely, to

attempt our conversion to the Church of Rome. He felt, I believe, a very sincere regard for us, and would have made any sacrifice to accomplish what appeared to him so desirable a result. But, at the same time, I felt that great caution was required on my part; that a word from him could send me at a moment's notice from Rome; and that wisdom and prudence demanded that I should rather endeavor to draw out his opinions—to get at his method of reasoning with Protestants—to learn all he had to offer—that I should rather endeavor to do this than to declare my own opinions, and so, by openly opposing him, expose myself to the danger of being sent from Rome. I believed him to be really our friend, but I feared lest I should make him as really our enemy.

We soon fell into conversation on the subject.

It commenced by his asking me how he had been occupied during the amusements of the carnival—how I supposed he had been engaged, adding that he had taken no part in the ordinary amusements of the season.

To this inquiry I had no reply to offer, and therefore merely said that it was to be presumed he was occupied with something more suited to his sacred office.

He immediately rejoined with much complacency, accompanied by some pride and joy—that sort of feeling very general among them when they have performed what is called "a good work"—that he had been engaged in receiving a Protestant into the bosom of the Church of Rome.

I was very far from feeling any complacency at

this announcement, and I was anxious to learn which of my countrymen was the unhappy victim. I could not understand how any one seeing the realities of Romanism at Rome could ever be persuaded to join the system; so, resolving to watch my opportunity, and seeing he had some object in introducing the subject, I left him to himself, merely remarking that I thought he had been very naturally occupied.

He then told the circumstances with much simplicity, that the man was dying; that he had no relatives near him; that one of his companions had talked much to him about sending for a priest; that he had never avowed any thing on the subject of religion or of a priest; that, as he was near death, my friend, as a priest, was at the bedside of the man; that he found him so far gone as to be speechless; that he therefore stated to him that he would kneel down and offer a prayer for him. His words were, "He was speechless; so I said I would kneel down and say one of my prayers for him. I then immediately knelt down, and said the 'Hail, Mary,' the 'Ave Maria.'"

I was perfectly astonished, and could not repress the expression of my intense astonishment that at such a moment, when an immortal soul was passing into eternity—when all the awful accompaniments of death were around him, he could think of offering such a sentence, for prayer it was not, as the "Hail, Mary!" I repeated the words of the "*Ave Maria*," and asked how it was possible that he had no word to offer—no counsel to give—no message of forgiveness to announce—no gospel of salvation to preach? How it was possible that, instead of praying to Christ for for-

giveness, praying to the Spirit for grace, praying to God for salvation, he could only have offered these words of worship to the Virgin Mary? I was deeply moved at what appeared to me a frightful neglect of the eternal interest of the dying man, and did not hesitate to express myself strongly as to the fearful responsibility he had incurred.

He seemed not to have heard me, as if he was absorbed in his own thoughts, so that my words were lost on him; and he said, with eagerness, that he had observed, as he knelt and said the "Hail, Mary!" that the dying man moved his lips, as if secretly repeating the words after him; for, being speechless, he could not repeat the words openly; and that he said to the dying man, "And can you repeat that prayer after me?" for, he said, addressing himself to me, "there is nothing against which the feelings and prejudices of Protestants are more strong and enduring than against praying to the Holy Virgin; so," he added, "I felt that when the dying man could join me in that prayer to the Holy Virgin, he must have been very far gone toward us."

"Very far gone indeed," I replied.

"Yes," he continued, "he seemed to repeat the prayer after me; and feeling he must have gone very far toward us, I asked him further whether he could not join our Church in all the rest. He showed by his manner that he could, and that he wished to be received into our Church; so I heard his confession, and gave him absolution."

At this I was on the point of asking my priestly friend, whose tone and manner was exultation in its

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highest degree, how he could hear the confession of a man who was speechless, and how a speechless man could utter his confession; but I checked myself on recollecting that, according to their canons, he was justified in exhorting the man to make confession, and then in assuming a confession to have been made in such cases where the person is too far gone to be able to speak; so I was silent.

He proceeded to say, that, after having thus confessed and absolved the dying man, there arose a doubt as to whether the man had ever been baptized; and, though baptism must never be repeated, yet as Protestants were very careless in administering baptism, it was felt safe to give conditional baptism to such converts. It was so customary, he said, among the Protestant Churches to baptize without properly pouring the water on the child, that there was no certainty that there was a real baptism; and though they could not think of repeating baptism, yet they always gave conditional baptism in such cases to converts. "And in this way," he added, "I baptized the man conditionally, and then I had him immediately confirmed, and he received the communion, and then the extreme unction, and thus he received almost at once no less than five sacraments!"

He spoke this in a tone of exultation and triumph, as if some great and good achievement had been accomplished. I must confess that I was amused, notwithstanding the sadness of his statement and the solemnity of the subject. It seemed so strange a proceeding for a man—a minister of Christ, at the bed of a dying man, merely to offer as a prayer the "Hail,

Mary;" it seemed so simply said that when a Protestant prays to the Virgin Mary he must be very far gone; it seemed so necessary to apologize for rebaptizing a Protestant; it seemed so absurd to speak of a speechless man making a confession of his sins so as to receive absolution; and, above all, it seemed so inconsistent with all our views of true religion to regard it as necessary, and even to make a boast of it, that this speechless man had in so short a time received the five sacraments, penance, baptism, confirmation, communion, extreme unction!

And then, to crown all, he told me, in reply to my inquiry as to what Protestant Church the man had belonged, that he was a Swiss—one of the soldiers of the pope's troops! I felt that a poor Swiss mountaineer, sent to Rome in his youth as a soldier for the pope's guards, living all his life at Rome, and at last dying speechless in a foreign land, and with a foreign tongue—I felt that the scene was scarcely one for my friend to boast of. It was one to awaken sadness of heart and gentleness of feeling. The narrative, however, was one that gave me the opportunity of introducing an inquiry on a subject on which I was anxious to have some information.

I asked why, on so solemn an occasion as a deathbed, when an immortal soul was about passing into the presence of God, why did you pray to the Virgin Mary instead of praying to Jesus Christ? In common with all Protestants, I would have prayed to Jesus Christ, or to God through Jesus Christ.

He answered that it was their opinion—the opinion, too, of many of the fathers—*that God hears our*

prayers more quickly when they are offered through the blessed Virgin than when offered through any one else.

I had anticipated this answer, owing to some things previously communicated to me from another person; and in order to draw him out to an explanation of this doctrine, I merely said that I could not see how it was possible for him to justify such an opinion.

He replied that there was warrant in Scripture to justify it, for there was in the book of Revelations a vision in which the elders are described as offering odors, which are said to be the prayers of the saints, so that it was clear that the saints offered prayers for us.

I reminded him that "saints" was always the Scripture name of Christians—not dead, but living Christians; and that "elders," that is, "presbyters," describe the ministry of the Church; and, therefore, that the vision of the elders offering the prayers of saints represented the ministry of the Church offering the prayers of the living Christians. In all this there was nothing to justify his praying *to* Mary. The vision described the elders offering the prayers *of* saints on earth, and did not justify our praying *to* saints in heaven. And, after all, I asked how such a vision could justify his saying the "Hail, Mary," at the bed of the dying man, and also justify his statement *that God hears the prayer offered through the Virgin Mary more quickly than that offered to Christ.*

He remained silent.

I therefore asked how he supposed those persons whom he regarded as saints in heaven heard the prayers of men on earth, and how he could justify the

practice of praying to them for this intercession, assistance, or any thing else?

He said that it was not a practice or duty obligatory on them; that it was not enjoined or commanded by the Church; that it was only recommended as good and wholesome—at least it was so recommended by the Council of Trent; and, therefore, it was not necessary to communion with them.

I replied that that was true in theory, but not in practice; for by making these prayers to saints part and parcel of the public Liturgy of the Church, so that no man could join in her services without joining in these prayers to the saints, she practically compelled the thing. But, I added, since the Council of Trent declared the practice to be good and wholesome, it would be well that some reasons or proofs could be adduced to justify the statement.

He answered, promptly, that the argument from experience was decisive. He paused for a moment as if recollecting himself, and then went on to say that it was the experience of good Catholics, that when they prayed to the blessed Virgin their prayers were answered. Many and many a time, he said, when a godly mother prayed for her ungodly son, who was wandering in the way of sin and shame—praying that he might be brought back to repentance and holiness—when a mother thus prayed to the blessed Virgin for her son, she finds that, sooner or later, her prayer is answered—that her son is brought back repentant and holy; and connecting this with the blessed Virgin, who was herself a mother and able to sympathize with a mother, she recognizes it as the

answer of the Virgin to her prayers, and is therefore encouraged to pray to her again. He continued to say it was the same way in praying to other saints. When praying to them for any particular object—for recovery from sickness, for deliverance from any trouble, for the conversion of a beloved child, or, indeed, for any object of prayer generally—when praying thus to a saint for these, it is often found by experience that the prayer is fulfilled and the object granted, and this experience induces them to pray again and again to the saints.

I had never heard this argument before, at least in this form; so, to prevent all mistake, I asked particularly whether his argument was not one simply derived from experience—experience of answer to such prayers. He at once answered in the affirmative, adding that experience proved to be their best encouragement; and when I remarked that there was no point more liable to be mistaken than the supposed connection between prayers and events, and that, as it was God who alone could dispose and order events, so it was to him alone our prayers should be offered, he did not seem to heed or to hear me, but went on with his own argument.

He said that many persons had been converted through this method of prayer—through prayer to the blessed Virgin and the saints; and thus experience of the truth asserted by the Council of Trent, that it was good and wholesome, proved a great encouragement as well as strong argument for it; and the more so, as the feeling of devotion to the Virgin has a mysterious something in it that will ever linger about the heart

of the man who has ever felt it. It is one of those feelings that, once admitted, can never afterward be totally obliterated. There it still clings around the heart; and though there may be coldness to all other religious impressions; though there may be infidelity or even scorn upon all our faith; though there may be the plunging into the wild vortex of every sin, yet still there will not unfrequently be found, even among the very worst of our people, a lingering feeling of devotion to the blessed Virgin. It is as a little thread that still keeps hold of the soul, and it will yet draw him back. All else may be broken, but this thread, by which the blessed Virgin holds him, still clings to his soul. Even in the most wild, wicked, and desperate men—even among the bandits in their worst state, there is always retained this devotion to Mary; and when we can not get at their hearts in any other way —when every other argument, or truth, or principle, or feeling of religion fails to make any impression, we frequently find access opened to their hearts by this one feeling still lingering about them; and thus we find by experience that a devotion to the blessed Virgin proves often the means by which we are able to lay hold of their hearts, and win them back to our holy religion.

I said that I had frequently heard of this devotion to the Virgin as characteristic of some of the very worst persons in Italy; that, after renouncing God, the Father, Son, and Spirit—after surrendering every element of Christianity and devotion to Christ, they still sometimes retain this devotion to the Virgin Mary. I said that, to my poor judgment, such a state

of things, instead of being an argument in favor of this devotion to Mary, was really its greatest condemnation. It was as if a life of sin, and vice, and murder was felt to be inconsistent with a devotion to Christ, but, at the same time, perfectly compatible with a devotion to Mary. It was as if they felt they could not retain both Christ and sin, but that they could retain both Mary and sin. This, at least, was the apparent reasoning of such persons, and certainly it was the plain matter of fact, as implied by what had just been stated to be the experience of the Church. At all events, I added, it seems to imply that the Virgin Mary is more accessible, more lenient, more loving to the poor sinner than Jesus Christ.

He repeated what he had said before on this point expressive of the greater leniency, the gentler compassion, and the closer sympathies of Mary; adding, that he was borne out in such an opinion by that of the fathers, of whom many were of opinion that even *Christ himself was not so willing to hear our prayers, and did not hear them so quickly when offered simply to himself as when they were offered through the blessed Virgin.*

I felt this was a hideous sentiment, and could not forbear to say so; adding, that when such opinions were circulated by the priesthood, I could no longer feel surprised at the extent—the extravagance to which the devotion to Mary had gone in Rome; that I felt the whole devotional system of the Church of Rome, the prayers unceasingly offered to the Virgin, the innumerable pictures of the Virgin, the countless images of the Virgin, the many churches dedicated to

the Virgin, the universal devotion rendered to the Virgin, the manner in which all the services and prayers of the Church and people are impregnated with thoughts of the Virgin—the extent to which, in conversation, all classes went in speaking of the Virgin, all had impressed me with the feeling that the religion of Italy ought to be called *the religion of the Virgin Mary*, and not *the religion of Jesus Christ.* I added that it was impossible to justify such a state of things. "If," said I, "I enter the Church of the Augustines, I see there an image of the Virgin Mary as large as life. Some are decorating her with jewels as votive offerings; some are suspending pictures around her as memorials of thankfulness; some are placing money in a box at her feet; some are prostrate in profound devotion before her; some are devoutly kissing her feet and touching them with their foreheads; some are repeating the rosary before her, as if acceptable to her; all turning their backs upon the consecrated Host—turning their backs upon that which the priest is elevating at the high altar, and which he and they believe to be Jesus Christ himself bodily and visibly among them; turning their backs upon Christ, and turning their faces to Mary, practically forsaking Christ for Mary, with a prostration the most profound before her image—a prostration that was never surpassed in the days of heathen Rome, and can never be justified in Christian Rome."

He said, in answer to all this, that for his own part he would not act thus, and that it was not right to judge of the Church by the devotion of the ignorant.

My wife then interposed, and said she had witnessed all this, and was shocked at what seemed to her to be a most fearful idolatry; for while the priest was saying mass and elevating the Host at one end of the church, and some of the people bowing before it, the image of Mary stood at the other end, and some of the people were in precisely the same way bowing before it. Some preferred what they believed to be Christ; some preferred what they regarded as an image of the Virgin.

He replied, with much gentleness, that he never prayed to the Virgin of the Augustines; that it was not a sightly image; that it was really an ugly image, and had never excited his devotion, and, in fact, he had never prayed before it; but still, he thought it scarcely fair to speak against this devotion to Mary as exhibited by the more ignorant, inasmuch as they had learned its value by experience. Many of those whom we had witnessed there had no doubt offered many a prayer to her and had found an answer. Many a mother praying for her child had obtained her petition. They were poor people, subject to privations, afflictions, sicknesses, and they found relief and consolation in going to the blessed Virgin.

He said all this in a manner embarrassed and hesitating, as if feeling he must say something, but as having no confidence in his own words; and when, observing this, I reminded him that these poor people ought to have been directed to Him who is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation," he seemed to feel the truth of it, but was silent.

After a few words showing the true source of re-

lief and consolation in all our distresses and afflictions, I went on to say that there could be no answer from the Virgin Mary, inasmuch as she could not hear the prayers that were offered to her. I asked, How does the Virgin Mary hear the prayers of men? How do the saints hear our prayers?

He looked at me as if he had never thought of the point before—as if the inquiry had never occurred to him before. He said nothing.

I therefore proceeded to state clearly the point involved in my question. I said, that, as the Godhead, from its very nature, was omnipresent and omniscient, it was easy to understand God's hearing our prayers, and knowing our devotion of heart. He could know our feelings, our wishes, our wants, our sincerity, our prayers. But the Virgin Mary was not omnipresent or omniscient. The other saints were not omnipresent or omnisoient; and as neither she nor they could read the secret depths of the human heart, so it was not easy to understand how they could hear or know the prayers that were offered to them. It should be recollected that one man prays to the Virgin Mary in London, a second prays to her in China, a third in America, &c. It seems hard to conceive how she can hear and know the prayers offered thus by different persons in London, in China, in America, &c. It seems difficult to understand how she or any saint in heaven can know the wishes, the thoughts, the devotion, the prayers of the millions who are praying to them in so many different parts of the world at the same time. If she or they were omnipresent—if omniscient as the Godhead, all would

be easy to conceive, all would be intelligible; but as they are no more than finite creatures in heaven, this can not be. I asked, therefore, How can Mary—how can any saint in heaven, hear the multitude of prayers from the multitude of hearts on earth?

He said, in reply, that they were spirits; that they were not like us on earth, but spiritual beings in heaven. He spoke as if the difficulty had never occurred to his mind in its strength before; as if he really thought that, from their being not corporeal, but spiritual, every thing was easy.

I reminded him that their being spirits, embodied or disembodied, did not affect the question. They were finite spirits, and therefore could not pervade the infinite. They were not omnipresent. They were not omniscient. They were only spirits, and not God, who alone knoweth the heart, and therefore who alone knoweth prayer.

I have seldom seen a man habituated to controversy more perplexed than my friend appeared at this question touching the means by which Mary or the saints could hear and know our prayers. For a moment he seemed disposed to think it might be some privilege in the possession of such spirits; but, after some hesitation and acknowledgment of the difficulties the question raised, he threw out, in the way of suggestion, that it might perhaps be that God reveals it to them—that, being in God's presence, they learn it from Him.

I remarked that this was no more than a suggestion—a mere perhaps—a supposed possibility. It was not a settled fact on which a system could be

based, and therefore it was wholly inadequate to justify so grave a practice.

He said at once that he did not just at that moment recollect any other way in which our prayers or hearts could be known to the blessed Virgin or the blessed saints.

I therefore said that his suggestion, though as good as any other of which I had read or heard, defeated the whole object of the practice. The practice of invoking Mary and the other saints was taught on the principle that men ought not to approach God directly or immediately, but indirectly through these as his favorites, even as we would approach an earthly sovereign through his courtiers.

He at once assented to this.

I therefore added, that if the prayers and aspirations of votaries are not heard or known to the saints until God reveals them to them—until they learn them through Him, then the prayers and aspirations must first go to God, and afterward to the saints; must, in short, go directly and immediately to God, and indirectly and mediately to the saints. This utterly subverts the whole system, which is based upon the opposite idea. It supposes that the prayer first reaches God; that He reveals it to the saint; that the saint then prays it back again to God, presenting to Him the petition of the votary; and thus, according to this system, God is our mediator to the saints, and not the saints our mediators to God.

He said that they did not regard the saints as mediators of redemption, but only as mediators of intercession, who were to intercede with God for us.

I replied that I was fully aware of the distinction, but that it rather strengthened my argument; for as their province was to present our prayers to God, and to intercede with God to hear and grant our prayers, so it was especially essential to them as intercessors that they should hear our prayers and know our hearts. "You," I added, "make the Virgin Mary and the saints mediators of prayer. It is necessary, therefore, that they be able to hear our prayers; and the only explanation you give is a suggestion that makes God our mediator of prayer to the saints, instead of the saints being mediators of prayer to God."

He evidently had nothing further to offer. He saw the difficulty, and, after some hesitation, from which I was not disposed to extricate him, being in hopes of having raised a doubt, or at least a question, in his mind that might work there hereafter, he said that, at all events, the Council of Trent had not commanded the practice.

To this I said that the point for him and for me to consider for our own soul's sake was not whether the Council of Trent commanded it or not. There could be no question as to the fact that the thing was practiced; and though it was attempted to justify it by saying we should approach an earthly sovereign through his courtiers or favorites, and ought in the same way to seek access to the King of heaven, yet, when it is considered that, according to his system, we must first make our petition known to the king, and then the king must make it known to his courtiers or favorites, and then they must tell it back again to the king—when it is considered that his sugges-

tion requires such a parallel as this, it must be felt that it requires no elaborate refutation.

He seemed to feel the difficulty of his position, and to be revolving in his mind how he best could escape it. But, although he exhibited a desire to find an answer, as if anxious to gain a controversial victory rather than to attain a truth, I yet felt that the difficulty might, by the blessing of divine grace, give birth to other difficulties; and so, shaking his confidence in the imagined impregnability of his Church, might lead eventually to further and fresh inquiry. I could not expect that any thing that I could offer, especially under the peculiar circumstances and manner in which I was obliged to state my views, could have any lasting effect on his mind, especially as I could so seldom give expression to my argument as if it were my own deep feeling, but only as a suggestion as to what might possibly be the impression on the minds of others. But I also felt much encouragement, for I knew I was acting for the best, and that it was my duty to leave the result, in a spirit of prayer and faith, with Him who orders all things according to the councils of his own will. In this feeling, therefore, when I observed him perfectly perplexed, I pressed the difficulty in another form.

I added, that I could not see how the practice could be "good and profitable," inasmuch as it lay on the verge of idolatry. Without saying that it was idolatry in the strict sense of the word, there were many who could scarcely see how they could avoid idolatry, for there was no certainty as to the real sanctity of these saints; there were many enrolled in the canon

of saints, of whose title to that pre-eminence there was no great evidence—at all events, no very satisfactory or certain evidence. In short, no man on earth could speak with certainty as to the persons who are saints in heaven. There were many persons who had no faith in the process of canonization—no confidence in the process of examination before canonization—no assurance of the genuine sanctity of the persons canonized—even more, who believed that some of those supposed saints were in a far worse region than heaven; and thus the praying to them might prove to be praying to devils instead of saints, and so be the very worst species of idolatry.

He said that, though my objection might hold so far as absolute certainty was required, yet that there was moral certainty as to the sanctity of those who were enrolled or canonized as saints, and he thought that moral certainty was sufficient in such a case; that we might reasonably and safely proceed on moral certainty; but that, at all events, men might pray to the Virgin and the apostles, as there could be no doubt as to their sanctity.

I replied that this objection did not apply to them, but to St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Thomas à Becket, and some others. St. Dominic was remarkable as the most ferocious of persecutors, St. Francis as the inventor of superstitions, and St. Thomas as the disturber of kingdoms; that the argument applied to such saints as they; but that the objection, so far as the Virgin and the apostles were concerned, was that drawn from the impossibility of their hearing the prayers that were offered to them.

He paused a moment, and then stated that the ancient fathers of the Church recommended the practice.

I replied by saying that it was very true that some of the fathers seemed to recommend the practice, but it was equally true that some others of them as strongly objected against it; that the most diverse and opposite passages might be cited from them upon the point, not only from different fathers, but even from the same father, his writings in one place being the opposite of his opinions recorded in another; and I proposed at once to produce passage for passage with him in the library—to produce a passage against the practice for every one he could produce in its support. And I then suggested, that if this could be done, the writings of the fathers ought to be laid aside as contradictory, and therefore of no authority on the subject.

He hesitated in his answer to this, but after a moment replied that the contradictions were only apparent and not real, and could be easily reconciled.

I referred at the instant to St. Chrysostom, where he cites the example of the woman of Canaan, not stopping to pray to the apostles, but going to Christ himself. "God," says Chrysostom, "is always near. If you entreat a man, you must inquire what he is doing, and whether he is asleep or at leisure, and perhaps the servant gives no answer. But with God there is nothing of all this. Whenever you go and call on Him, He hears; with Him there is no want of leisure, no mediator, no servant to keep you off. Mark the wisdom of the woman of Canaan. She does not pray to James—she does not beseech John—she does not fly to Peter; but she breaks through them all,

saying, I want no mediator, but, taking repentance as my spokesman, I come to the fountain itself. It was for this He left the heavens; it was for this He became flesh; it was that such as I might have boldness to speak to Himself. I want no mediator; have mercy upon me." I argued that this was language against going to the saints very different from what my friend had employed on this point.

To this he replied that he could adduce passages from St. Chrysostom quite as strong in favor of the practice, and that such as I had cited were capable of explanation; that the woman certainly ought not to have gone to St. Peter or St. James, for that the Lord himself was present. He was there in the flesh, and she ought to have gone to Him at once, and this was all that was designed by St. Chrysostom.

I reminded him that such an explanation might apply to the fact in the gospel narrative, but that the argument was not on the gospel narrative, but on the exhortation of St. Chrysostom. He expressly says, in another place, "When we have a petition to make to men, it is often the case that we can not go straight to themselves and speak with them, but it is necessary for us first to procure the favor of their ministers, or stewards, or officers; but with God it is not thus. There is no need of intercessors of prayer with Him, and He is not so ready to hear our prayers, and answer graciously when we pray through others, as when we come and pray of ourselves to Him." Now our Lord was not there present when St. Chrysostom gave this advice to his people, and therefore the explanation does not apply—does not touch the real point of the

argument, namely, that St. Chrysostom advises us not to go to the saints, but to go directly to Christ Himself.

He avoided this precise point, and went on to say that he could cite places from St. Chrysostom and other fathers that were quite opposite to this; and though there might thus be the appearance of self-contradiction in their writings, yet they could easily be explained by a comparison with other places; that apparently contradictory passages might be cited in reference to the blessed Trinity—to the incarnation, &c.; that this was particularly true in reference to the use of images, against which there certainly were very strong passages in some of the fathers, but those passages ought to be explained away instead of being regarded as contradictory or opposed to images, for it ought not to be supposed that the fathers were opposed to images, St. Gregory expressly saying that images might be kept for devotion, but not for worship, and Epiphanius and others were equally clear.

I reminded him that, when Epiphanius saw a vail or curtain in the church with a picture on it, he immediately tore it in pieces and forbid the practice.

He took no notice of this, but added that in the old Liturgies there were prayers to the saints, and as Liturgies were the truest tests or evidences of the opinion of the Church, so they prove beyond answer the practice of the primitive churches.

I said, in reply to this, that I was under the opposite impression; that I had seen these Liturgies, those that go by the names of Basil, Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and others, and never saw prayers *to* the saints; that there were express prayers *for* the Virgin Mary,

and the apostles, and the saints, but not prayers *to* them; that, so far as my reading went, it appeared to me that in the ancient Liturgies generally, the prayers were *for* the saints, and in the modern Liturgies of Rome, the prayers were *to* them; and that this was some difference indeed, and one that at all events took away the cogency of what he had stated in reference to the Liturgies and the practice of the primitive churches.

He denied this in a manner that, as it struck me, showed he had either never before heard my statement, or had at least never examined the subject with much care; and he seemed to regard his own statement as so certain as to be beyond contradiction; so he turned the subject, and reverting to the former point, said that the practice of praying to the Virgin Mary was found to be a holy practice—a practice greatly tending to promote holiness in those that cultivate it. "When," he said, warmly, "we think of the purity and the holiness of the Virgin; when we think of her as selected by God to bear his Son in her womb; when we think of her as the purest and holiest of creatures, the very thought of one so pure and holy will dissipate every thought of impurity and unholiness; the very thought of one so sinless will take away every thought of sin. A devotion to the blessed Virgin prevents us from sinning, and a sincere devotion to her is a great safeguard against sin."

Such a sentiment as this could scarcely be heard unmoved by any one who loved the Gospel and cherished a feeling for the glory of the Savior. It was substituting Mary for Christ; substituting the thought

and recollection of Mary for the thought and recollection of Christ; substituting the notion of her purity for the reality of his purity, and substituting some fanciful ideas respecting her for the remembrance of his death, and sacrifice, and atonement as a safeguard against sin. It was a difficulty with which I had often to struggle in endeavoring to repress the strong and warm expression of my real feelings on such occasions of blasphemy; for I could scarcely think otherwise of the sentiment. But I was, considering the natural warmth of my nature, greatly restrained and preserved from showing a decision of feeling which might have compelled my retirement from Rome.

I therefore merely asked him, though with all the earnestness which I felt, whether, if attending the bed of a dying man, he would feel himself justified in speaking to an immortal soul, when about to pass into eternity, and desiring him to fly to Mary; that in all his doubts and perplexities he was to look to Mary; that in all his fears and terrors he was to look to Mary. I asked whether, considering his responsibility at such a moment, he would address a dying man in language that pointed only to the Virgin Mary, and made no mention of Jesus Christ? I then read the following words from the Roman Breviary. "If the winds of temptation arise, if thou run upon the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, call upon Mary. If thou art tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of detraction, of envy, look to the star, call upon Mary. If anger, or avarice, or the temptations of the flesh toss the bark of thy mind, look to Mary. If, disturbed with the greatness of thy sins, troubled at the defile-

ment of thy conscience, affrighted at the horrors of the judgment, thou beginnest to be swallowed up in the gulf of sadness, the abyss of despair, think upon Mary—in dangers, in difficulties, in doubts, think upon Mary, invoke Mary. Let her not depart from thy mouth, let her not depart from thy heart," &c. I asked him solemnly whether he would use such language, even though sanctioned by his Breviary, in preparing a dying man for the presence of God in the eternal world.

He replied unhesitatingly that he would, and then went on to argue that experience justified him; that experience proved that the prayers offered to the Virgin were heard and answered; that mothers praying to her who was herself a mother, with all the sympathies of a mother, were heard and answered; that such prayers for children in sin, or in danger, or in sickness, were heard and answered; and it was this practical experience that proved the great encouragement to the devotion of ourselves to the Virgin Mary. He then went on to say that a Catholic devotion to the blessed Virgin never interfered with a right devotion to Jesus Christ, but redounded rather to his glory; but that it required a Catholic heart to see and understand this; that one who was not a Catholic could not understand it; that the ignorant often perverted it, going on in sin under the belief that, by praying to her, she will pardon them; that all this was only the abuse of the system; that the devotion to Mary was a holy devotion, and a source of holiness. If we think of one so pure, so chaste, so holy, the thought will keep us from sin. St. Alphonso de Li-

guori was a proof of this, so devoted to the blessed Virgin, and so holy in his life. The order of the Jesuits was another illustration. Their devotion to the blessed Virgin is known through the whole world; and as for their holiness, they have been accused of ambition, of intrigue, of politics, with opposing sovereigns and disturbing the peace of kingdoms, but no one has ever charged them with impurity or immorality. They are a living proof that devotion to the blessed Virgin is conducive to holiness. But, he added, it requires a Catholic heart to comprehend this. To others it may seem dishonoring to Jesus Christ; yet it is not so. The Holy Virgin is never honored above Christ, nor as equal to Christ, but only as His mother, who has a mother's influence over him; and thus all the homage and worship paid to her is really a homage and a worship to Him, inasmuch as it is only as His mother that it is offered to her.

He ran on in this way for some time, and I feared to interrupt him by any attempt at opposing or confuting him. It would have given me the appearance of an opponent rather than a listener; and when I considered the station and influence of the person, I felt particularly anxious not to awaken suspicion, and desirous to appear as an intelligent and inquiring listener.

I therefore said that I was acquainted with some of the works of the St. Alphonso de Liguori whom he mentioned; that among other things in his "Glories of Mary" is the vision of the two ladders extending from earth to heaven; that at the top of one is the Virgin Mary, and at the top of the other is Jesus

Christ; that all who attempted to enter heaven by the ladder of Jesus Christ fell back and failed, while all who tried the ladder of the Virgin Mary succeeded by her assistance. I mentioned this as I had already done in conversation with another priest, and I asked whether such language did not exalt the Virgin Mary, not only as equal, but as superior to Jesus Christ—superior in the love, and compassion, and mercy of a Savior, as if she was a safer Savior than Jesus Christ?

He seemed thoroughly vexed and ashamed at this quotation from an author and saint whom he had so highly praised. He hesitated, and seemed perplexed for a satisfactory answer; but at length said that such language was intended by Liguori merely to express the love of Mary, and to show how willingly and how effectually she uses her influence as a mother in behalf of those devoted to her. He then added, that it was the opinion of many of the fathers and saints that God hears more quickly the prayers that are offered through the blessed Virgin; that so greatly is she in the love of God, and so great in her influence with God, that the prayers offered through her ascend to heaven more quickly, and are heard and answered more speedily and effectually than otherwise, and this was probably the meaning of Liguori in the details of the two ladders from St. Bernard; that many sinners are troubled with fears on account of their sins; that surely we all must at times be in fear on account of our many sins; that many such fearful or timid sinners come to Mary instead of Jesus. They feel that she is so merciful, so loving, so

willing to save them, that they come to her instead of coming to him—that when they think of Jesus Christ they are afraid.

"Afraid of Jesus!" I exclaimed, involuntarily, startled at the idea of Jesus being less attractive, less loving, less merciful than Mary. "Afraid of Jesus, who died for them—who showed his love in dying for them, and yet not afraid of Mary, who never professed or showed any love for them!"

He immediately checked himself, and looked suspiciously and inquiringly at me.

I feared I had shown my feelings too plainly, and therefore, in the hope of turning the subject, asked him to explain the vision of the two ladders on his principles.

He said, expressively, that he had already explained the doctrine of the Church; that as our Lord on the cross desired John to behold his mother, and that disciple obeyed and took her to his own home, so he was a type of the Church, which is, in like manner, ever to look on Mary as its mother; and therefore the Church respects her, loves her, serves her, and venerates her as its mother, to whom, as a child, she comes for comfort, consolation, grace, and assistance in every time of need.

I replied that our Lord on the cross desired the Virgin Mary to look on the beloved disciple John as if he were her son, instead of Him now dying on the cross, and then desired the beloved disciple John to look on Mary, now bereaved and desolate, as if she were his own mother, and to take care of her as such. And the narrative states that John, acting on this, took Mary to his own home, and thus complied with the

dying wishes of Jesus Christ. "But," I added, "how does this prove the moral of the two ladders, and those seeking Heaven through Mary succeeding and being saved, while those seeking heaven through Jesus Christ fail in the effort?"

He replied that he was unwilling to argue further; that he had stated the doctrine of the Church; that that doctrine, in honoring Mary, was not dishonoring to Christ; that it was a subject on which, as that of images and pictures, there was much misunderstood, and that it required "a Catholic heart" to understand it rightly.

He thus broke off the conversation.

CHAPTER V.

Invitation to a Polemical Discussion—The Prohibition of the Scriptures for Sale at Rome—Universal Ignorance of the Sacred Volume—Salvation only in the Church of Rome—Infallibility of the Popes necessary to be believed—Whether there be Salvation in the Church of England—The Church of Rome has never claimed Infallibility.

A COMMUNICATION had been made to me to the effect that the reverend professor of Dogmatic Theology wished to have a theological discussion with me. Whether this arose from a hope that he might prove a means of making a proselyte of me, or from a desire for a controversial conference with me, in consequence of our previous collision in the Collegio Romano, it is not for me to state. A communication had been made to me, by a clerical friend of the Church

of England, that the professor had expressed himself thus desirous of a meeting, and a formal message, with an invitation or challenge to a theological discussion, was afterward conveyed to me by the reverend professor of Canon Law. I gladly accepted it. I felt it might prove a new and additional source of information as to the real nature of the Church of Rome, and the arguments by which she is supported, though I certainly felt rather nervous at the prospect of a controversy with two of the most able and subtle of the order of Jesuits. A brother clergyman was with me, and we knelt together and prayed with earnestness for the light and grace of which we felt in need.

On the appointed day we knelt together in prayer, and soon afterward the professor of Canon Law and the professor of Dogmatic Theology were announced. At first our conversation was of a general character, but soon turned to those subjects which were congenial to all our feelings.

Some remarks had been made by me designedly on the subject of the Holy Scriptures, with a view to directing our conversation into a profitable channel; and I took occasion to remark on the ignorance of the Holy Scriptures so prevalent among the people of Italy—so prevalent, indeed, that it was impossible to argue with them; and that it seemed to English minds a practical illustration of that which was so often asserted in England, namely, that the Church of Rome was opposed to the circulation of the sacred volume.

The professor of Dogmatic Theology replied by saying that, although it was very true that the peo-

plè were wholly unacquainted with the nature of the Holy Scriptures, yèt it was very incorrect to suppose that the Catholic Church was opposed to their reading them; that the Church set a great value on the sacred volume, and venerated it too highly to let it be used commonly or indiscriminately; that, so far from forbidding its circulation and perusal, the Church permitted it to all whom she thought likely to profit by it, and forbade it only to those who, being ignorant, would be likely to pervert and misapply it; but that it was a great mistake, and indeed a calumny against the Catholic Church, to say that she was opposed to the full and unrestricted use and circulation of the Scriptures.

The answer I made to this was, that, having resided many years among a Roman Catholic population in Ireland, I had always found that the sacred volume was forbidden to them; and that, since I came to Italy, and especially to Rome, I observed the most complete ignorance of the Holy Scriptures, and that it was ascribed by themselves to a prohibition on the part of the Church.

He at once stated that there must be some mistake, as the book was permitted to all who could understand it, and was, in fact, in very general circulation in Rome.

I said that I had heard the contrary, and that it was impossible to procure a copy of the Holy Scriptures in the Italian tongue in the city of Rome; that I had so heard from an English gentleman who had resided there for ten years; that I looked upon the statement as scarcely credible; that I wished much

to ascertain the matter for my own information; that I had one day resolved to test this by visiting every bookselling establishment in the city of Rome; that I had gone to the book-shop belonging to the Propaganda Fide—to that patronized by his holiness the pope—to that which was connected with the Collegio Romano, and was patronized by the order of Jesuits—to that which was established for the supply of English and other foreigners—to those which sold old and second-hand books, and that in every establishment, without exception, I found that the Holy Scriptures were not for sale. I could not procure a single copy in the Roman language and of a portable size in the whole city of Rome; and that, when I asked each bookseller the reason of his not having so important a volume, I was answered in every instance, *é prohibito*, or *non é permesso*—that the volume was prohibited, or that it was not permitted to be sold. I added that Martini's edition was offered to me in two places, but it was in twenty-four volumes, and at a cost of 105 francs (that is, four pounds sterling), and that, under such circumstances, I could not but regard the Holy Scriptures as a prohibited book, at least in the city of Rome.

He replied by acknowledging that it was very probable that I could not find the volume in Rome, especially as the population of Rome was very poor, and not able to purchase the sacred volume; and that the real reason the Scriptures were not at the booksellers, and also were not in circulation, was not that they were forbidden or prohibited by the Church, but that the people of Rome were too poor to buy them.

I replied that they probably were too poor, whether in Rome or in England, to give 105 francs for the book, but that the clergy of Rome, so numerous and wealthy, should do as in England, namely, form an association for cheapening the copies of the Scriptures.

He said, in reply, that the priests were too poor to cheapen the volume, and that the people were too poor to purchase it.

I then stated that if this was really the case—that if there was no prohibition against the sacred volume —that if they would be willing to circulate it, and that, really and sincerely, there was no other objection than the difficulties arising from the price of the book, that difficulty should at once be obviated. I would myself undertake to obtain from England, through the Bible Society, any number of Bibles that could be circulated, and that they should be sold at the lowest possible price, or given freely and gratuitously to the inhabitants of Rome. I stated that the people of England loved the Scriptures beyond all else in this world, and that it would be to them a source of delight and thanksgiving to give for gratuitous circulation any number of copies of the sacred volume that the inhabitants of Rome could require.

He immediately answered that he thanked me for the generous offer, but that there would be no use in accepting it, as the people of Rome were very ignorant—were in a state of brutal ignorance—were unable to read any thing, and therefore could not profit by reading the Scriptures, even if we supplied them gratuitously.

I could not conceal from myself that he was prevaricating with me; that his former excuse of poverty, and this latter excuse of ignorance, were mere evasions; so I asked him whose fault it was that the people remained in such universal and unaccountable ignorance. There were above five thousand priests, monks, and nuns, besides cardinals and prelates, in the city of Rome; that the whole population was only thirty thousand families; that thus there was a priest, or a monk, or a nun for every six families in Rome; that thus there was ample means for the education of the people; and I asked, therefore, whether the Church was not to blame for this ignorance on the part of the people.

He immediately turned from the subject, saying that the Church held the infallibility of the pope, to whom it therefore belonged to give the only infallible interpretation of the Scriptures.

This led the conversation in another direction. If I had prevented this, it would have given me the appearance of a partisan, as if I were more anxious to prove and fasten a fault upon the Church of Rome, instead of one who was searching for information, and was entering on a friendly rather than a controversial conversation. I allowed him, therefore, to lead me to the question of infallibility, feeling that it was a subject which might be turned to the advantage of truth.

I therefore remarked, somewhat carelessly in manner, that I believed, or at least had heard, that there was much difference of opinion in the Church of Rome as to the seat of infallibility; that I had heard of some asserting it to reside in the popes; that others held it

resided in General Councils; while others still maintained that infallibility was the exclusive possession of the Church in general. I said that, as far as I could form a judgment upon such a subject, the preponderance in the argument was in favor of those who claimed it for the popes; that, generally, all the various advocates seemed to me to argue very powerfully when disproving the positions of their opponents, but became singularly weak when endeavoring to establish their own; but still I thought the weight of argument was in favor of the pope.

The professor, my opponent, seemed delighted with this admission, and seemed to take courage from it to express himself very strongly, saying, in the broadest and clearest terms, that no man could be a true Catholic—a true member of that Church, out of which there is no salvation, who did not believe in the entire supremacy and infallibility of the popes as successors of St. Peter.

I replied that such a sentiment was by no means universal; that it was so far from being held by the Roman Catholics of England and Ireland, that they would look on it as illiberal and untrue; that they did not hold it, and that no man in those countries would assert that none could be saved unless in the Church of Rome.

He said that it was impossible my statement could be correct, as no man was a true Catholic who thought any one could find salvation out of the Church of Rome. They could not be true Catholics.

I answered that they seemed as zealous and as true as others, and that there could be no mistake as to my

statement, for that some of the priests in England and Ireland had often, in conversation with myself, denied the doctrine of exclusive salvation; and that I had known some of the priests make the same statement in the most public manner.

He again exclaimed that it was impossible; no true Catholic could say so; and if any one said it, he was not a true Catholic.

I repeated my words, adding that I had heard it too often to be mistaken; that the people of England hated exclusiveness, and bigotry, and narrowness of mind; that the Roman Catholic priests, when entering on controversy, were therefore always anxious to disclaim all notions of exclusive salvation for the Church of Rome; and that I had myself been repeatedly a witness to such disclaimers, so that there could be no mistake. Whether they were sincere in such disclaimers, it was not for me to say; but all those among them who aimed at any popular influence always disclaimed it. One priest, a Mr. Esmonde, whom I heard disclaiming it on a public platform, was a member of the order of the Jesuits, and therefore I suppose a true Catholic member of the Church of Rome.

He again said, with vehemence, that it was impossible; such persons were not true Catholics, and certainly were a great injury to the Church. The truth of the Church was, that no man could be saved unless he was a member of the Church of Rome, and believed in the supremacy and infallibility of the popes as the successors of St. Peter.

I said that that was going very far indeed; for, besides requiring men to be members of the Church of

Rome, it required their belief in the supremacy and infallibility of the popes.

He reiterated the same sentiment in language still stronger than before, adding that every one must be damned in the flames of hell who did not believe in the supremacy and infallibility of the pope.

I could not but smile at all this, while I felt it derived considerable importance from the position of the person who uttered it. He was the chief teacher of theology in the order of the Jesuits, and the chosen professor of theology in the Collegio Romano—the University of Rome. I smiled, however, and reminded him that his words were consigning all the people of England to the damnation of hell.

He repeated his words emphatically, and with some assumption of manner, as if he thought he could overawe or frighten me by the statement. He said that the people of England would all certainly be damned eternally in hell unless they embraced the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope. He looked at me with an air of triumph.

"And what," said I, "what is to become of me? I do not hold, nor can I hold that doctrine; and do you consign me, and numbers of others like me, to everlasting damnation, because I do not hold it?"

He did not hesitate a moment in answering that I could not be saved; that when once I had the opportunity and the power of hearing the truth, and being informed of it, I could not be saved if I did not receive it; but that, if I had not the opportunity and power, he could not speak so decisively.

I then looked at him with much seriousness, and

spoke with great deliberation, saying that truth—the truth of God, was the great object of my researches, and that I felt that the whole world was nothing in comparison with it; that I had read the Holy Scriptures of God; that I had read the controversial writings of Cardinal Bellarmine, Bossuet, and all the ablest controversialists of the Church of Rome; that I had read also the works of the ablest English writers in answer to them; that for many years I had been seeking a mastery over the intricacies of these questions; that I had come to Rome to obtain a personal inspection of the Church at its fountain-head; that I had many and long conferences with several priests in Rome on the subject, and that I was absolutely constrained, on a balance of the arguments, not only not to believe, but to reject altogether the doctrine of the supremacy and infallibility of the pope; that I therefore was one who had enjoyed every opportunity and power of adequate information on the point; and, considering that I had arrived fairly and honestly, and to the best of my judgment, and to the conviction of my conscience, at the conclusion to reject this doctrine, I asked him whether he would still consign me to the damnation of hell? I spoke with a grave look and in a solemn manner, to prevent trifling on so important a question.

He hesitated and said, that if I had indeed used all possible diligence, as I intimated, and if I still found my prejudices invincible—if I was still invincibly ignorant, he would not speak too decidedly. He was unwilling to do so. The Church had made an exception of such a case; but he hoped I should yet see

and believe it. His manner in all this showed that his natural courtesy alone prevented his declaring a decided judgment.

I felt that quite enough had been said upon this point. I had obtained the judgment of one professor very clearly, and observed that the other professor did not contradict him in the least; so I suggested that we should turn to some other subject.

He immediately proposed to me to argue the question of the possibility of salvation in the Church of England, suggesting that as no one could be saved out of the Church of Rome, he would prove that no one could be saved in the Church of England; asking me to enter on the question, and undertaking, on his part, to prove against me that the Church of England was not the Church of Christ; and that, while I continued a member of the Church of England, I could not be saved. It was a formal challenge.

I replied that I could not assert that the Church of England was *the Church* of Christ; that I believed and held she was *a part, a member, a branch of the Church* of Christ; that she held all necessary truth, and that salvation was to be found within her, and that I was prepared to maintain thus far, but no further. I could not defend the proposition in the form in which he proposed it.

He said that he would shape his argument so as to embrace that view, and then, before he commenced, we agreed that nothing should be asserted respecting the doctrines of either Church, by either him or myself, without producing the canon, or decree, or bull, or article of the Church containing it. He was

not to claim for the Church of Rome, nor to ascribe to the Church of England, any thing whatever, without producing the authoritative canon of one Church, or the authoritative article of the other. I was pledged in the same way, and thus it was so arranged that there could be no railing accusations, no undue assertions, no claims on one hand or charges on the other, no assertions or denials, as all was to proceed on the authoritative documents of the respective churches. I was careful to have this settled between us before proceeding further, as I perceived he was disposed to enter on the question more as a practiced and confident controversialist than as a sincere inquirer. He seemed a bold, lively, warm-hearted man, experienced in the disputations of the college, and confident in his own resources, and he seemed to have sought me rather in a youthful spirit of emulation and desire for a polemical tournament. He wished to try his prowess and break a lance with me, and that, too, in no unkindly or ungenerous spirit. I resolved, therefore, to meet him, so as to show him that the argument was not so clearly with him as he had imagined, and that he might find in me his equal in argument, though certainly far from being his equal either in talent or in learning.

He commenced according to the method still practiced in the classes of the college, namely, arguing in the form of a syllogism. He said,

The Church of Christ is infallible.

The Church of England confesses herself fallible.

Therefore the Church of England is not the Church of Christ.

I at once pointed out the fallacy or error of his argument, showing, as I had already stated, that the Church of England did not pretend to be the Church of Christ, but only a part, or branch, or member of it; and that the fallibility of a part of the Church was no proof she was not a part of the Church, to which only, as a whole, infallibility could belong.

He acknowledged this to be sufficient, and said he would state his argument in another form.

The Church of Christ, in all her parts, is infallible.

The Protestant Church of England confesses herself fallible.

Therefore the Church of England is not a part of the Church of Christ.

I answered that the syllogism was as faulty as the preceding one, but that I would at once meet it by denying his minor; that is, by denying that the Protestant Church of England confesses herself to be fallible: I was not aware that she had made such a confession.

He laughed at me good-humoredly, and with a look of triumph, and said that the Church of England had confessed it, and he could produce the article. He referred me to the Article XIX.

I produced the article and read the words, "As the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." I said that this Article of the Church of England asserted that other churches, and the Church of Rome in particular, had erred, and were fallible, but that she had said nothing of herself; and

certainly had not, as his argument supposed and required, confessed herself fallible.

He frankly acknowledged this to be a sufficient answer, and that his argument had failed, but said he would arrange his syllogism in another form, so as to obviate this. He seemed, however, slightly—very slightly annoyed at finding himself so easily foiled in his first two attempts. He proceeded with great quickness to arrange his argument again.

The Church of Christ, in all her parts, *claims* to be infallible.

The Protestant Church of England *does not claim* to be infallible.

Therefore the Church of England is not the Church of Christ.

The ordinary mode of replying to this would have been by denying the major, namely, that the Church in all its parts claimed to be infallible; and this would have opened the whole question of the infallibility of the Church, whether as a whole in the Church general, or in a part as the Church of England. I felt, however, in my secret soul, that there was another mode of dealing with it. I had, in years long past, pondered the matter well and thoughtfully, and many years' experience and research alike confirmed my feeling. I had never expressed it in private, nor had I employed it in public, and I thought that the present was an occasion the most fitting possible to advance it. I knew that my present controversy was with an able and learned man, and not only so, but was with one of the most influential Jesuits in Rome, assisted by another member of the same order, profoundly

versed in the Canon Law, and therefore peculiarly competent to deal with my argument. I felt, therefore, disposed to try it. I am free to confess that I was somewhat nervous in advancing a position so utterly untried, especially considering the talents and learning of my opponents; but I felt that He whose I was and whom I desired to serve, and who had hitherto so wonderfully sustained me in many an arduous struggle, would turn my success or failure to some good account, by which His truth would be manifested and his Gospel glorified. So, after some moments' pause for reflection, I requested my opponent to repeat, and kindly to write his syllogism on paper.

He wrote it as follows:

The Church of Christ, in all her parts, claims to be infallible.

The Church of England does not claim to be infallible.

Therefore the Church of England is not part of the Church of Christ.

Having read it carefully, I drew my pen over the word "England" in the minor and in the conclusion, and writing the word "Rome" in its stead, I returned the paper as my answer. It was as follows:

The Church of Christ, in all her parts, claims to be infallible.

The Church of Rome does not claim to be infallible.

Therefore the Church of Rome is not part of the Church of Christ.

On handing it to him in this altered form, I remarked quietly that if his syllogism was legitimate as against the Church of England, it must be equally

legitimate against the Church of Rome, and that therefore he could not deny its conclusiveness.

The moment he read it he laughed heartily but good-humoredly at me, and said that the Church of Rome did claim infallibility, and expressed surprise at my minor containing a statement so palpably incorrect, and therefore so easily confuted. His companion joined him in his merriment, and they both seemed to rejoice in a victory so easily and so completely gained.

I was in no other degree affected by this than to feel thankful that it gave me a little space to collect myself, and to express my argument with precision; I therefore calmly reminded my friends that the Church of Rome had never, on any occasion, asserted her own infallibility; that some of her members and some of her advocates—some of her individual divines had, without any authority from her, claimed and asserted it for her and in her name, but that she had never, in any form whatever, either claimed or asserted it herself.

They replied with one voice that the Church of Rome had always and in all places claimed and asserted her infallibility; that it was frequently done; and so well known and so universally recognized and admitted, that they wondered how I could mean to question it. They spoke with evident surprise, marveling how I could think of making so strange and unusual an assertion; and their surprise seemed so natural, that, even though they were Jesuits, I felt they were sincere. They were really and truly surprised.

I answered with cool and deliberate words, showing by my manner that I was conscious of the truth and reality of my position, and that I could not be turned

from it by a laugh. I answered that there was no decree of any general council—that there was no bull of any pope—that there was no canon or article of an authoritative nature in the Church of Rome which asserted or claimed infallibility for that Church. I reminded them that this my statement was clear and explicit; that it was of such a nature, that if it was untrue or founded on an untruth, it could most easily be confuted; and all they had to do was that which I now challenged them to do—to name the decree of any council, or the bull of any pope, or the authoritative canon or article which claimed or asserted infallibility for their Church. I added that the terms of our present conference required that, as he claimed infallibility for his Church, he should produce the authoritative document asserting that claim, or he should at least state when and where it was authoritatively asserted.

After some moments' pause, he said he could produce several instances, and named the Council of Constance, the Council of Basle, the Council of Florence, and several other lesser authorities. I knew each of the decrees to which he referred; and therefore, when he said that one asserted the supremacy of the Church of Rome as the mother and mistress of all churches; and that another held that every soul was subject to the Roman pontiff at the peril of his salvation; and that others still asserted that every man must be obedient, and owed obedience to the successor of St. Peter; and others, again, that it belonged to the Church of Rome to interpret Holy Scripture—when he said all this, I reminded him that all this was beside the real question—was nothing to

the real point before us; that my assertion was, that no received decree, or bull, or other authoritative document of the Church of Rome claimed *infallibility*, and that he answered me only by producing some which claimed *supremacy* and *authority*.

He said that supremacy and authority implied infallibility.

I answered by an emphatic No! I said that in England we felt that the law of the land was supreme and authoritative; that we often felt that a specified law was a bad law—a mischievous law—a law that ought never to have been enacted, and ought immediately to be repealed; but, bad and mischievous as we might think it, we yet felt it was still the law of the land, and was therefore possessed of a supremacy and authority to which we are bound to yield obedience. But though we ascribe to the law, and to the legislative power of the nation, a *supremacy* and *authority*, we prove, by our efforts to repeal the obnoxious law, that we do not ascribe *infallibility* to it. I then said that all the decrees, bulls, canons, &c., to which they referred me, only asserted such a supremacy and authority as demanded the subjection and obedience of men to the Church of Rome, or to the pope as its head, but not one of them claimed or asserted infallibility for any party.

My opponent here did not deny the principle I had thus laid down, but he seemed puzzled and perplexed at finding that all his documents failed in the precise point of asserting infallibility. He referred to several others which he had not already named, but in a moment after he gave them up as inadequate; all, when

examined, were disposed of by my preceding answer.

I shall never forget, while I live, the spectacle of these two Jesuits, able, learned, and subtle as they were, and long habituated to controversy, yet so completely perplexed at this turn of the argument as to be looking at one another, and consulting and endeavoring to find an answer sufficiently plausible. My opponent, the reverend professor of Theology, seemed a little cast down at first, but soon rallied, and laughed at the perplexity and singularity of his position. He laughed good-naturedly, no longer at me, but at himself, and honestly said he had never seen the difficulty before; that he had thought the point clearly settled, but that it certainly was not so; and that he could not see how to answer me.

His companion, however, the reverend professor of Canon Law, was not so good-humored on the occasion. He was excited and annoyed at the failure, and asked confidently and warmly why it was that Protestants were always charging the Church of Rome with arrogance, and presumption, and blasphemy for claiming infallibility, if, as would now appear from the argument, she has never claimed it; and why should it be made by me, and others like me, a ground of charge against her, if we really believed she was not liable to that charge. And he asked, somewhat warmly, whether my habit of advancing this charge was not a sufficient proof that I believed that the Church of Rome really claimed infallibility.

I was unwilling to reply to this in the warm spirit in which it was spoken, and I merely said that I had

never objected to the Church of Rome that she had been arrogant, or presumptuous, or blasphemous in claiming infallibility, or even that she ever claimed it or pretended to it at all. I believed that, as a Church, she never, on any occasion whatever, had advanced such a claim; I knew, indeed, that her advocates usually claimed it for her, and that her controversialists generally asserted it for her, and that the multitude imagined she both claimed and possessed that divine prerogative; but I also knew that they were not THE CHURCH—that a few learned advocates were not the Church—that a few subtle controversialists were not the Church—that the multitude of an ignorant people were not the Church—and I knew, also, that THE CHURCH herself had never claimed or asserted it. If I was wrong in this broad statement, I was in presence of those who could easily correct me. They could tell me when and where THE CHURCH had claimed or asserted it. They could name the council and point to the decree. They could designate the pope and point to the bull. There never was an assertion more easily confuted, if indeed it was capable of being confuted at all.

They still asserted that the Church was infallible, and claimed to be infallible, though they seemed in a quiet way to acknowledge that they could not further prove their position.

I reminded them that, by the terms arranged for our conference, they had no right to claim any thing as a doctrine of their Church unless they could name or produce the authoritative decree, bull, canon, or article which asserted it, and that, on the present oc-

casion, they assumed infallibility as claimed and decreed by the Church, but had altogether failed in adducing the authority for their statement; and then I added, that under those circumstances I had a right to argue, that if a church's not claiming to be infallible was evidence that it was not the Church of Christ, then the Church of Rome, from the circumstance of this deficiency, could not be any part of the Church of Christ; so I asked them how they liked their own process of argument.

I must say, in justice to both these gentlemen, that they bore themselves with good temper and Christian good humor in this trying and difficult position; and although at first they seemed to feel keenly, though kindly, their difficulty, yet they joined us—the three others who were present—in a laugh at the singularity and unexpected awkwardness of the position in which, by their own process of argument, they were placed.

Our conversation soon took a more general turn, and did not revert to the main subject proposed for our conference. We soon after separated.

When, a short time afterward, we met again, it was to consider whether the mass was a true, and proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, as stated in the canons of the Council of Trent. Our meeting was at the invitation of the reverend professor of Dogmatic Theology, and our argument became unprofitble and uninteresting to the unlearned, owing to our time being spent chiefly on the question whether the words "ministering to the Lord," in Acts, xiii., 2, meant *sacrificing* or *ministering* in the ordinary sense of the word. He asserted that it

meant sacrificing, in the strictness of that word. I maintained that the word was in several places in Scripture applied even to secular magistrates, whose work and office did not imply or involve the idea of sacrifice. He acknowledged this, but stated that my argument applied only to the word "ministering," whereas his argument was that the words "ministering *to the Lord*" had another meaning, and involved the idea of offering sacrifice.

We soon after parted, and it never was my good fortune to have the pleasure of again meeting the professor of Theology, except when, on hearing of my approaching departure from Rome, he came to bid me farewell. I was much pleased by his manner and gratified by his kindness. He spoke with earnestness, and I replied with some words of warm feeling and Christian anxiety. I trust that our meeting and our parting were not without profit to us both.

CHAPTER VI.

Conversation with the Professor of Canon Law—The Fête at the Jesuits' Church, closing the Year—The Question of Infallibility residing in a Council or in a Pope—Seven Signs or Tests by which to Discern when the Pope is Infallible and when Fallible—The alleged Unsuitableness of the Scriptures as a Rule of Faith—The same Argument applied to the Papal Decisions.

THE prospect of an elaborate conference with the reverend professor of Canon Law in the Collegio Romano was one of considerable interest to me. It had

been promised that he should be informed of my anxiety for information as to the means or test by which I should be enabled to ascertain an infallible bull from a fallible one; to know a pope pronouncing infallibly from one pronouncing fallibly; to distinguish a decision *ex cathedrâ* from one *non ex cathedrâ*. The point was one of no inconsiderable interest, and I felt no little pleasure in the anticipation of entering on it with one who was so competent to deal with it; one who, from his learning, could state all that could best be offered on the question, and, at the same time, one who, from his position in the college, would add certain authority to his statements. This professor was a Jesuit, one of the ablest and most accomplished of his order, and certainly one of the most elegant and most accomplished at Rome. I should have felt somewhat nervous at the prospect of this conversation, were it not that I had already had the good fortune of making his agreeable acquaintance, and that the point to be considered was one in which all the difficulties of argument would necessarily be on his side.

The professor came on the appointed day, accompanied, as usual, by a lay brother, and dressed in all the peculiar costume of the order of Jesuits.

Our conversation commenced by my thanking him for his kindness in having made such gratifying arrangements to enable my wife, and myself, and one of our friends to witness the fête at the Church of Gesu, which belongs to the order. It was a fête celebrated on the last day of the year. His holiness the pope had arranged to attend and to sing the *Te Deum*, as an act of public thanksgiving on the part of the

head of the Church on earth for the blessings and mercies of the year that was then passing away forever. He attended in state. He was accompanied by the cardinals. The Swiss guards were arranged to preserve order. The congregation, which was chiefly English, was large. We were conducted by one of the order through a passage within the wall of the church, by which we entered a small apartment, and were then led through a series of chambers, apparently those of a convent, till we were placed in a small gallery in the best possible position for observing all, while we were ourselves beyond the observation of any. As seen from this position, nothing could surpass the picturesque beauty of the spectacle, especially at the moment of the elevation of the Host. The choir or chancel, with the high altar, was splendidly illuminated. The high-priest and his assistants were before the altar in their most magnificent robes. Twelve youths from the College of the Propaganda Fide formed two lines connecting the corners or horns of the altar with the rails of the chancel. They were clothed entirely from head to foot in scarlet, and held gigantic candles of wax in their hands. Those candles were about five feet long, and not less than five or six inches in circumference; and as the priest proceeded with the prayer of consecration, they all knelt still and motionless as marble statues; and as the priest elevated the Host, they all gracefully drooped their heads, and slowly leaned forward their kneeling bodies till they almost touched the ground, and bent their large candles all at the same instant, and with the most practiced regularity, till every candle seemed to bow in

unison like things of life, in devout adoration to the present and visible divinity. As the eye wandered at this moment from our little gallery, whence we could view the whole space of the church—as it ranged from the splendid illumination of the high altar, and rested on the officiating priest in robes of white silk, damasked with the richest foliage of gold, and then fell upon the twelve youths in scarlet, bowing gracefully to the earth with their gigantic candles, and then fell upon the aged pontiff, the claimant as vicar of Christ and anointed head of the Church on earth, and then looked on the long array of cardinals, those anointed princes of the Church, robed entirely in scarlet, and then strayed along the congregation, of which the ladies were clothed in black and veiled, and the men were mostly in the same color, while the Swiss guards were arranged among them, relieving the mass of black costume with the brilliant scarlet and yellow of their peculiar and antique uniform—as our eyes wandered over all this scene in this magnificent and noble church, with its antique marbles and costly decorations, and its vaulted roof was filled with the sweetest and most beauteous music, we felt that we had never witnessed any thing at Rome, in the way of a religious fête, so perfect in its arrangements, so picturesque in its appearance, and in such good taste and perfect keeping in all its accompaniments. It was the perfection of a religious spectacle, and exhibited the good taste and the worldly wisdom of the order of the Jesuits.

We had great reason to thank some members of the order for their arrangements in our favor. The only persons similarly favored on this occasion were

an Italian princess and her companion, who alone shared with us the privacy and the advantage of this little gallery. Whatever were their motives for this kindness—and, in truth, they were scarcely concealed, seeing that the cardinal vicar had offered a mass with *the intention* to move God to facilitate our conversion—it showed a nice disposition on their part, and gave to us on this, as on some other occasions, increased facilities for observation. We thanked the professor, as the courtesy and kindness of some of his friends of the order deserved at our hands.

My wife expressed her thanks in better terms than I could command, at the same time giving lively utterance to the gratification derived from the ceremony as a beautiful spectacle, and saying that its beauty was such, and that there was so much of the picturesque in the *coup d'œil*, that, if transferred to canvas, it would make a most attractive picture; that there was exceeding beauty as well as solemnity in it.

He observed, in return, that it certainly was a beautiful and most charming sight to any one, but that it was much more so to those who, like himself, viewed the pope and the assembled cardinals as the head and representatives of the Catholic Church—the whole Church of God, and who looked on the beautiful spectacle as the act of the Church of Jesus Christ singing their *Te Deum* in praise and thankfulness for all the mercies and goodness they had received during the departing year.

We said that we could quite understand the feeling in which he had viewed it, and which he had so appropriately expressed, and that we fully apprecia-

ted that feeling, especially as we had understood that such was the nature and object of the ceremonial, as designed by those who had taken part in the spectacle. However we might differ from him as to the details of the ceremonial or ritual portion of the spectacle, we were sure to agree with him as to the Christian duty and privilege of public thanksgiving for mercies received. If we could not agree with him in the details, we could certainly agree with him in the spirit of the act.

Our conversation then turned to my previous meeting with our mutual friend, the reverend Signor ———. I stated that he had given me much useful and important information, of which previously I was not in possession; that, in reference to the worship of the Virgin Mary, he had stated matters of considerable interest; and that we had a long and deeply interesting conversation on the all-important subject of infallibility—on the necessity for its existence, and on the place or seat of its existence; and that, supposing infallibility to exist either in a council or in a pope, I was disposed to go with him in thinking that, if it existed in either, the weight of argument seemed to preponderate in favor of the pope.

He was much pleased at this admission on my part, and expressed himself as if he had understood me to state absolutely my belief in the existence of infallibility in the pope. He said I had admitted that the preponderance of argument was with that opinion.

I reminded him that my observations were only on the supposition that such infallibility did really exist in either a council or a pope, but that the reverend

Signor ——— had by no means satisfied me that it really existed in either the one or the other. But I could freely say that, assuming it to exist in either a council or a pope, my judgment was in favor of the pope; and my reason was, that all parties on this particular point were fond of adverting to the words of our Lord to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." All those in the Church of Rome who claimed infallibility for that Church appeared to base it on these words, and on the words "Feed my sheep" and "Feed my lambs," which seem spoken to Peter, and to have connection with Peter; and therefore they appeared to me to prove the infallibility of the popes, as successors of Peter, much more naturally than the infallibility of councils, which are not in any way connected with these words. I said that I could not adopt the Roman Catholic interpretation of the passage concerning the rock, because I thought that our Lord meant to convey that He built his Church on the fact that He was the Son of God as confessed by Peter, and not on Peter at all; but that, on the supposition of the Roman Catholic interpretation being correct, namely, that the words referred to Peter, I thought that if the words involved infallibility, they involved the infallibility of Peter, and his successors the popes, rather than the infallibility of councils.

The professor, as a member of the order of Jesuits—for that order hold universally at Rome the very loftiest claims and pretensions to infallibility on the part of the popes, as contradistinguished from those

who hold that the infallibility belongs to the general councils—showed evident pleasure at my statement, and he appeared by his sparkling eye and joyous look to think that if I was not already a proselyte to his Church, I was at least in a fair way for such a result, and that it remained for him to conduct me to the final goal. He expressed himself as greatly gratified with my views upon the subject, and with the conclusion at which I had arrived.

I said that the difficulty between the reverend Signor ——— and myself arose from his pressing me much to join the Church of Rome, to abandon the Church of England, and to fling aside all my difficulties and objections, whether of mind or feeling, against the Church of Rome; to fling them all aside, and, no longer doubting, debating, or arguing, to throw them on the responsibility of the infallible tribunal which had infallibly decided them. I added that, in reply to this request on the part of our friend, I had asked him whether he could tell me, supposing infallibility to reside in the pope, how I could be enabled to judge with infallible certainty when the pope decided *ex cathedrâ* and when he decided *non ex cathedrâ*—when he was infallible and when fallible. I said that this was necessary, inasmuch as different popes had issued different and opposing bulls; that our mutual friend, the reverend Signor ———, had expressed himself as unable to explain the matter fully, and had promised that the professor himself should explain it to me.

He replied that the pope was infallible; that it belonged to him, as the successor of St. Peter, to be the

head of that Church, which was to be so founded and protected that the gates of hell should never prevail against it; that our Lord's promise in these words secured that this Church should be infallible; that this favored and privileged Church was the holy and Catholic Church of Rome, whose first bishop was St. Peter, and whose successive bishops, as the successors of St. Peter, were the infallible interpreters and expounders of her doctrines, the vicars of Christ, and the infallible heads of the Church.

I said, in reply to a great deal that fell from the professor upon this point, that the question at issue between the reverend Signor ——— and myself was not whether the popes were infallible, but how and by what means I could discern a fallible decision from an infallible one. I reminded the professor that he was of course aware that the popes were not always —were not *at all times* and *under all circumstances* infallible; that Pope Liberius had avowed Arianism, and that Pope Honorius was a Monothelite; and that, as popes were not exempt from the worst of heresies, as these two examples demonstrated, so the real difficulty was to find some certain test by which to know when a pope was fallible and when he was infallible.

He answered in a tone and with a manner that seemed, as I thought at the moment, to betray a shade of annoyance at my pointed allusion to Liberius and Honorius. He said, however, that Liberius was acting under restraint, and that he was not a free agent when he avowed the heresy of the Arians, and that, therefore, such avowal was not to be regarded as his real opinions. He said, also, that Honorius was

thought too mild and lax in not punishing the Monothelites, and that it was on account of this that he was called a Monothelite, and not on account of his holding their heresy. He concluded by saying that if either of these popes had proceeded to decide any thing *ex cathedrâ*, the decision would then have been infallible.

I replied that my reading of the histories of Liberius and Honorius compelled me to adopt a very different opinion as to the orthodoxy of these popes; that I was fully convinced that one of them was really an Arian, and that the other was as really a Monothelite; that I was aware that the order of Jesuits, as the supporters of papal infallibility, had advanced the statements which the professor had just expressed, in order to save, if possible, the infallibility of these two popes, but that I felt that they had failed, as all history was clearly against them. However, I continued, your own view shows that they acted and gave their decisions under undue constraint, or under a misplaced lenity; and therefore your own view shows that the popes are not *at all times* and *under all circumstances* infallible.

This the professor hesitated to acknowledge. It was more in his manner than in his matter. He merely said that when the pope uttered his decision *ex cathedrâ*, there could be no doubt of the infallibility of the decision. This at once conducted our conversation to the precise point which I felt most anxious to open, and I saw that there could be no difficulty in entering on it, but I desired much to do so without any appearance of a controversial spirit on

my part. I was anxious to stand in his eyes as one looking for information and open to conviction rather than as one disposed to controvert and impugn his statements, and I was really most desirous of learning the very point now before us, as I had never yet been able to find any thing on the subject in the writings of any divines of any church. It was a subject altogether new to me, and I feared that any preliminary conversation might awaken suspicions or doubts in his mind, which might prevent him being as communicative as my object required; and now, as on many another occasion during these conferences, I felt fully the necessity of turning in secret prayer to Him whom I desired to serve, that He might give me the power to restrain my naturally controversial temper, and the wisdom and the spirit to speak as became me. I felt nervous and diffident of myself, perhaps more than I ought, when I found myself under circumstances that prevented my speaking as plainly and as strongly as I otherwise might, lest I should appear as a controversialist rather than as an inquirer, and especially when I felt myself in the presence of men whom I had learned to regard, whether rightly or wrongly, as the most able, the most learned, and most subtle controversialists of the Church of Rome. The result did not always justify my fears, but those fears led me to look more frequently for the guidance and the wisdom of Him "from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift."

I said that, supposing the pope to be infallible whenever he uttered a decision or issued a bull *ex cathedrâ*, it was still necessary to know how we were

to ascertain a decision *ex cathedrâ* from a decision *non ex cathedrâ;* how, amid the volumes of opposite and conflicting bulls of different popes, we were to know an infallible bull from a fallible one, or, as persons in England usually express it, how are we to ascertain when a pope is infallible and when he is fallible?

He at once met the difficulty, and said that it was of very easy solution. He stated that there were certain requisites, certain essentials, which were characteristic of a bull *ex cathedrâ*, and without which it could not be received as *ex cathedrâ*, and that these characteristics were very easily ascertained. He added, that these requisites or essentials were seven in number, and that he feared to weary me by their detail, but that otherwise he would be happy to enter on them.

I did not fail to express, with all fitting courtesy, my wishes that he would continue so interesting a detail, and I expressed the obligations I should feel for such valuable information, especially as, coming from one holding his important position at Rome, it could not but possess much of authority in my eyes, and would be sure to possess the same in the eyes of others.

He then proceeded to state that there was no real difficulty in ascertaining when and under what circumstances the decision of the pope was to be received as infallible; that there were certain requisites or essentials, and that the presence or absence of these would be an adequate test by which to ascertain the point; that these requisites or essentials were seven

in number, and were all very clear and very easy to be found. He then described them in detail.

I. It was necessary, in the first place, that, before composing and issuing the bull, the pope should have opened a communication with the bishops of the universal Church; that in such communication he should ask their prayers to the Almighty that the Holy Spirit might fully and infallibly guide him so as to make his decision the decision of inspiration. He added that by thus previously asking the prayers of the bishops, he would obtain the prayers of the universal Church for Divine assistance before he proceeded to form or publish his decision.

I asked him how, seeing that there was a necessity for this previous communication on the part of the pope with the bishops, I was to inform myself that this requisite or essential had really been borne in mind. He merely replied that it was very easy to be ascertained, and then proceeded to the second particular.

II. It was necessary, in the second place, that, before issuing the bull containing his decision, the pope should carefully seek all possible and desirable information touching the special matter which was under consideration, and which was to be the subject of his decision; and that he should be specially careful to possess himself of all available information from those persons who were residing in the district affected by the opinion called in question, and who were found faithful in that district, that so the pope might have all the requisite information for an infallible decision from the very district in which the opinion on which the decision was sought had its origin or its existence.

I asked, in reference to this, how I was to be assured that the pope was thus rightly and fully informed; that he had sought and obtained the required information, and was thus capacitated for proceeding to issue the bull. He replied as before, that there was not the least difficulty in ascertaining this, and so passed on to the third particular.

III. He said that a further requisite or essential was, that the bull should not only be formal, but should be authoritative, and should claim to be authoritative; that it should be issued not merely as the opinion or judgment of the pope, in his mere personal capacity, but as the decisive and authoritative judgment of one who was the Head of that Church, which was the mother and mistress of all churches, to whom all Christians owed subjection and allegiance, and who was the living voice of infallibility, and who, as such, had the power and the authority to pronounce infallibly the decision required.

I remarked that this requisite could be easily ascertained, as it must necessarily appear on the face of the bull, the only difficulty being to obtain a true copy of the bull. He then stated the fourth particular.

IV. It was again necessary that the bull should be promulgated universally; that is, that the bull should be addressed to all the bishops of the universal Church, in order that through them its decisions might be delivered and made known to all the members or subjects of the whole Church. The pope was the fountain-head of all episcopal jurisdiction, so as that there can be no episcopal jurisdiction but from the pope; and as episcopacy is the only channel through which

every grace flows to the Church so it is necessary that the bull containing the decision of the pope be addressed to all the bishops of the universal Church.

I observed on this point that the superscription or title of the bull would at once show whether this essential was forthcoming, and I begged the reverend professor to proceed. He then passed on to the fifth requisite.

V. He stated that another essential was, that the bull should be universally received; that is, should be accepted by all the bishops of the whole Church, and accepted by them as an authoritative and infallible decision; that, after promulgation by the pope, it should be accepted and promulgated by all the bishops as authoritative and infallible, or at least should be simply accepted by them without formal promulgation, or even tacitly permitted by them without opposition, which is held to be a sufficient acceptance in a legal sense.

I said that this was a point very difficult to be ascertained. I knew not of any thing more difficult to ascertain with satisfaction than whether any given bull was received and promulgated, or simply received without promulgation, or only permitted without opposition in any given country. Some are received in Spain which are rejected in France; and some are received in France which are rejected in England and Ireland; and some are rejected in all these, and yet are said to be accepted in Italy; and the assertions made on all sides upon this fact were so contradictory, that I knew nothing so difficult to be ascertained to satisfaction. It opens out a prodigious sphere of in-

quiry and disputation. He smiled, and assured me there was not the least difficulty, and went on to the sixth particular.

VI. Another characteristic, he said, was of immense importance—indeed, more absolutely essential than any he had as yet named, viz.: The matter or question upon which the decision was to be made, and which was therefore to be the subject-matter of the bull, must be one touching faith or morals; that is, it must concern the purity of faith or the morality of actions; and this necessity arose from the fact that faith and morality are the matters upon which infallibility was designed to be exercised, and for the preservation of which this infallibility was given to the Head of the Church.

I remarked that this was very reasonable, and that I fully acquiesced in it; but that an opinion prevailed very generally in England that the Church of Rome had strained "faith" and "morality" to include all matters of fact, even matters of history, whenever they seemed to bear upon any question of "faith" or "morality;" that this was practically illustrated in the celebrated controversy between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, where the point at issue was the mere matter of fact, whether the opinions condemned by both parties were really contained in a specified book. I said that a difficulty might arise in prosecuting our inquiries as to whether this essential was there. He seemed a little annoyed at this allusion; so I begged he would be so kind as to proceed to the seventh particular.

VII. This was the last of the series. He said it was essential, in the last place, that the pope should

be free—perfectly free from all exterior influence, so as to be under no exterior compulsion or constraint. He stated that the bull or decision of Pope Liberius possessed the other essentials, but that this one was wanting. That pope had acted under compulsion—under a fear of his life, and therefore, as he was not free, his decision could not be regarded as *ex cathedrâ*. That bull, thus issued, was full of error. The pope, therefore, must be free from external influence or constraint, in order to his decision being received as infallible.

On this I remarked quietly, that it would be very difficult for me or for any one in England to ascertain, to any thing like moral certainty, whether the pope at the issuing of any bull was really under exterior influence or whether he was perfectly free. I did not see how it was possible to have certainty on such a point. He said as before, that there was no real difficulty in this or in any of the tests he had specified, and merely added that these several essentials or requisites were the tests by which any bull was to be tried. If they existed, then the bull was *ex cathedrâ*, and was to be received as infallible; but if any of them were wanting, then the bull was not *ex cathedrâ*, and could not be recognized otherwise than as fallible.

I felt exceedingly interested in all this detail. It was the first time I had ever heard of any means by which to test the existence of infallibility.

Hitherto various bulls and decrees had frequently been cited, and often one was asserted to be infallible and authoritative, and another fallible and rejected. One pope, with his decisions, was urged on one side,

and another pope, with his bulls, was cited on the opposite; and between conflicting bulls and opposite decisions, and one bull rescinding a former one, and one decision reversing a preceding one—amid all this conflict and confusion, I had never seen, or read, or heard of any means by which I could learn when a pope was fallible and when he was infallible. I therefore felt considerably interested in the details of the reverend professor of Canon Law, and thanked him warmly for the information he had imparted to me. I asked, however, several questions, anxiously avoiding the appearance of unnecessary caviling or captiousness, and putting them with the manner of one who rather sought further information. My questions referred to the difficulty which persons like myself, resident in England, would experience before they could ascertain whether the pope had asked for the prayers of the universal Church—whether he had sought and obtained the requisite information—whether his bull was really received and promulgated universally, &c.; and I suggested that it was quite possible that other persons in England, simple and unlearned men, unacquainted with such subjects, and wholly unable to obtain information on them, might feel these inquiries not only difficult, but absolutely impossible, and in any case altogether uncertain and unsatisfactory. I suggested, also, yet further, that if there was difficulty in ascertaining all these minute particulars in reference to any bull that might be issued at the present day, the difficulty must be enhanced a thousand-fold when the inquiry concerned some bull that had been issued some centuries ago. It becomes not only a moral, but even

an absolute impossibility, for ordinary men to carry out the inquiry to any satisfactory result.

He replied, that all that was necessary for any man in such cases was to go to his bishop—ask the bishop respecting the bull in question—and the bishop would inform him whether it was *ex cathedrâ* or otherwise. Nothing could be easier.

I said that though certainly nothing could be easier than such a course, yet I apprehended that nothing could be more unsatisfactory to an English mind. It proposed to leave the whole question of the fallibility or infallibility of any given decision to the word of a bishop, who was himself fallible, and might be mistaken both as to the fact and as to the meaning of the bull. It was not usual in England—it did not suit the character of the English mind, to refer the decision of such historical facts as the pope's freedom from influence—the reception of his bulls, &c., to the mere opinion of a bishop. Men there would be very apt to think themselves quite as good judges as to the matter of fact.

He said that the bishop was the legitimate channel for all communications from the pope as the Head of the Church and Vicar of Christ; and all doubts would at once be removed from the minds of humble and sincere men if they referred it to the bishop.

I replied that it would suggest itself to most minds that such a course was merely placing all their faith and hope of salvation on the word of a bishop—a man like themselves, and admitted to be fallible. And I added, that from my knowledge of the English mind and habit of thinking, men in England—men of com-

mon sense and ordinary judgment, in most things would prefer turning to the Holy Scriptures and judging for themselves. It would be a most difficult thing to alter their habit in this particular. They would prefer comparing the bull with the Holy Scriptures, and thus learning, not the opinion of the bishop, who was but a man, but the judgment of God in his own word, for so they habitually regarded the Holy Scriptures.

He laughed at me for this, and said that an appeal to the Scriptures was absurd and impossible. It might all be very well comparatively for men like himself and me, who were well read and well versed in sacred literature, but it was quite otherwise with men in general, and especially with humble and illiterate or ignorant men—in fact, with the great mass of mankind; for, he argued with a tone of great confidence, his whole face lighted up with the expression of conscious triumph, the Holy Scriptures are a volume that requires many preliminary inquiries before it can be received. In the first place, it will be necessary for the man to ascertain the authenticity of every separate book, or portion of the volume. In the next place, it will be necessary for him to prove the divine inspiration of every part of it. In the third place, the book is written in dead languages, and the man must know how to understand them, or have them translated. In the fourth place, it is a volume that has given rise to different meanings or interpretations, and the man should be able to judge upon these. All these, he argued, are preliminary inquiries, which are absolutely necessary to be made; and

as the poor and ignorant man, the ordinary man, is incapable of making them and judging on them, so the Holy Scriptures can never be a fitting volume for such a man to appeal to in matters of religion.

At this point of our conversation, where he seemed most confident and apparently conscious of a triumph over me, as if he thought no answer could be returned to his argument, I felt that he had given me a prodigious advantage, of which he was wholly unaware. It was the very position in which I had wished to place him, and I could not have led him into a line of argument more suited to my purpose. I felt in my soul that the Lord had delivered him into my hands, and could not but render my thanksgiving in secret to Him who gave me the opportunity of dealing effectually with this matter; and I inwardly prayed that I might be cool and collected, and effective in my reply. I hoped most fervently that it might have some effect upon his mind.

I began by stating that, while my own opinion on the point was a matter of unimportance, yet I apprehended his method of argument would be met in England in a very effective way—at least in such a way as I should be unable to answer, unless he informed me further than he had as yet done. I said that the most ordinary and common-place men in England would say, that if they forsook the volume of the Holy Scriptures for the volume of the papal bulls—that if they exchanged the Bible for the Bullarium, they could gain no advantage thereby; for if, as he had said, there was a necessity for a man to ascertain the authenticity of each book in the Holy Scriptures

before he could avail himself of it, then it was no less true that it was equally necessary for a man to ascertain the much-questioned authenticity of each bull in the Bullarium; that if, as he had alleged, the man must be carefully informed by study on the inspiration of the sacred volume before receiving it as his Divine teacher, there will exist a similar necessity for his being informed by study on the disputed infallibility of the papal Bullarium before receiving it as his infallible instructor; that if, as he had averred, the Holy Scriptures were written in the dead languages, and a man must learn to translate them before using them, the very same may be averred against the papal bulls, which also are all written in a dead language, and a man must learn to translate them before appealing to them; that if, as he had argued, the Holy Scriptures have been variously interpreted by various men, and all this variety must be resolved by every man before he makes the sacred volume his guide, it might in like manner be argued that the papal bulls have been variously explained, some received and some rejected by a vast variety of persons, and men must be able to decide on all these varying interpretations of bulls before accepting them as an infallible guide; in short, it would be argued—fairly argued, by men of no pretension to any thing but the possession of common sense, that every objection he urged against the volume of the Holy Scriptures was liable to be urged against the volume of the papal bulls. They were written in a dead language. They were the subject of various interpretations. They were the source of endless controversies. Their num-

ber and names were doubtful. Their title to infallibility was questioned. All men disputed as to which was fallible and which infallible. Some bulls were directly contradictory of others; some actually and by name were condemnatory of others; some were admitted on all hands to be erroneous and heretical; and the whole combined constituted a series of volumes almost as extended as a library, and therefore wholly inaccessible to the masses of a Christian population. They could never become the guide of a Christian people, and to this day have never yet been translated into the language of any Christian Church; while the Holy Scriptures, on the other hand, were universally translated, were small in size, convenient for reference, and incomparably more easy to be read, studied, and understood than the endless intricacies and scholastic niceties of the Bullarium. I said that men in England would argue thus, and would feel that they should lose rather than gain by exchanging their Bible for the Bullarium—the Holy Scriptures for the papal bulls.

I perceived that the countenance of the reverend professor was undergoing a change. It betrayed impatience and irritation. He looked rather angrily upon me; but I was resolved to persevere, though in terms and in manner as kindly as possible, speaking as if I was stating the probable objections of others rather than my own. I transferred the argument from myself to others, and expressed myself as inquiring how I should be able to answer such objections if advanced by others.

I therefore suggested that his argument on the sub-

ject of the papal bulls—that his seven requisites or essentials by which a bull is to be tested before it is recognized as *ex cathedrâ* or infallible, seemed liable to the objection that few—very few men indeed could possibly ascertain the existence of these tests. With all the learning of the reverend professor himself, and with what little reading I possessed myself, I yet feared that insuperable difficulties would lie in our way; and how much more fairly might a simple mechanic or peasant in England object that he knew nothing, and could know nothing, about the Bullarium, with its twenty or thirty folio volumes of scholastic matter in the Latin language; that he could never ascertain whether these seven requisites or essentials were present or absent; that it would be impossible for him to learn satisfactorily whether Pope Boniface, or Pope Hildebrand, or Pope Gregory, before issuing any bull, had sought the prayers of the universal Church; that it would be hopeless for him to attempt to ascertain whether they had sought and obtained all necessary information in the districts supposed to be most affected by the question under consideration; that no effort that could be made could assure him of the universal acceptance or promulgation of the bull on the part of all the bishops of the universal Church. Thus an unlettered man in England might fairly argue that, if it were necessary to enter on all these inquiries, cumbrous, difficult, and impossible as they were, before he could be assured of the legality and infallibility of each bull, there could then be no possibility of his getting even one step toward infallibility; and such a man seemed to me able to object with much

force, that if he was asked to abandon his Protestant principles and to embrace Roman views—to exchange his faith in the Holy Scriptures for a faith in the papal bulls—to build his confidence and hope no longer on the inspiration of the Bible, but on the infallibility of the Bullarium, it was only involving himself in a series of questions which he could never solve, and encumbering himself unnecessarily with all the difficulties of these seven tests—all the subtleties involved in the question of infallibility—all the disputes as to whether that infallibility existed in the popes or in the councils; in short, in a most cumbrous and difficult system; when, remaining in the principles of Protestantism, he had the Bible—the word of God—in his hands—a volume of easy access—a volume with whose language he was familiar from childhood—a volume that required practically no extent of human learning to understand for all practical purposes in this life; in short, a facile and convenient rule of life and faith, which, as being inspired of God, was necessarily infallible. I suggested that any simple and unlettered man in England might so argue, and the argument seemed to me to involve a powerful objection—one that required an answer; and I asked the professor whether he could supply me with such an answer.

The whole manner of my reverend friend exhibited his sense of the difficulty. He seemed to me to feel that his argument recoiled on himself; not having perceived that, while he had imagined his seven tests were overpowering my scruples, they were really so many stumbling-blocks in the way. It had not, I

must confess, a favorable impression on his manner, as he seemed to feel irritation at being foiled rather than disposed to give the argument due weight in his own mind. Nor would I have pressed it so far, only that I felt it my duty to lay the difficulty fairly and fully before him, that it might, by that influence which is not the less potent because it is unseen, work its own way in his mind when time and opportunity might afford it further consideration.

He only said, in reply, that he thought all these difficulties would be removed by referring to the bishop, whose decision should be final. He would at once say which bulls were fallible and which infallible, or, rather, which were *ex cathedrâ* and which *non ex cathedrâ*. It appertained to the office of the bishop to do so.

I said it might, and very probably would be objected by some minds to this, that the bishops of France gave an answer different from the bishops of Italy on these bulls; that on one side of the Alps certain bulls are pronounced infallible, which at the other side of the same Alps are held to be fallible, and therefore that a reference to the bishop could not be sufficient to satisfy some thinking men; at least, I could not answer for the people of Italy, but certainly such a system could never satisfy the thinking and judging people of England. They habitually inquired and judged for themselves, and never would leave such a matter of fact to the decision of the bishop.

He argued that I ought not to refer to the difference of the French and Italian bishops on the subject of infallibility; that it was a very favorite system of

arguing among the English writers, but that it was really of no importance, for the Church was one—was at unity, and that I should find that the religion of France was identical with the religion of Italy; so that, however differing on the point of infallibility, they were one and united on every thing else.

I said that I apprehended we could not agree on that point, as I thought there were other particulars on which the difference was equally marked.

Our conversation soon took another turn. I felt that enough had been said by me, and that the subject—the special subject of our conference—was sufficiently opened. I therefore allowed him to lead away to other and more general topics. As my wife was almost always present, there was great facility for this whenever it was desirable. We were all soon conversing on a variety of points connected with the external aspect and form of religion at Rome; and the professor and we parted with expressions of mutual gratification in forming an acquaintance which promised to be profitable and improving, as connected with our eternal interests.

CHAPTER VII.

Opinions entertained at Rome respecting the Movement in the Anglican Church—The Bishop of Exeter and others at Oxford—Caution against Romans intermeddling with the Church of England—Separation of the Temporal from the Spiritual Power of the Popes—Argument derived from the Success of the Missions of the Church of Rome—An Indian Tribe converted—Their holy Lives—Wonderful Miracle—Credulity prevalent at Rome—Inconsistency between two Doctrines of that Church—Transubstantiation and the Mass—The Immaculate Conception—Human Merit—Indulgences.

THE movement among certain gentlemen at Oxford furnished a frequent subject of conversation among my reverend friends of the order of Jesus. It was evidently a source of the largest anticipation, and there were moments when nothing seemed too extravagant in the way of hope as a result from it. It was generally looked on as the beginning of the conversion of England, and many an eye brightened and many a cheek flushed in triumphant expectation of her return to the arms of Rome. The remarkable letter or rescript of the cardinal-vicar appointing a NOVENA, that is, a nine days' service, and promising a PLENARY INDULGENCE, that is, a complete exemption from purgatory, and immediate admission into paradise after death, to all who took part in this Novena, praying for the extirpation of heresy, the exaltation of the Church, and the conversion of England to the Church of Rome—this remarkable document had not yet been issued; but hopes were high, conversations were frequent, and confidence was unbounded on the subject,

and masses were offered for the conversion of individuals for whom a peculiar interest was felt.

The volume by Mr. Ward on the ideal of a Church, which had been published in England a short time before, had found entrance into Rome. It was sent to me by one of my reverend friends of the Collegio Romano; and when he came shortly afterward, his mind seemed full of the subject of the Anglican Church—its present state and its future destinies. We were not likely to agree on such a subject. As usual, his companion remained silent, and took no part in the conversation.

He expressed himself in strong terms against the Anglican bishops for having set themselves against the principles and practices proposed to be introduced by the gentlemen at Oxford. He stated that they had shown their opposition; and although he regarded their opposition as likely to fail in the end, yet they had sufficiently shown their feeling, and proved that nothing was to be expected from them. He selected, however, and excepted the Bishop of Exeter; and it seemed as if no language of hatred and scorn combined could be too strong to express his feelings respecting him. He said, in a rather exaggerating way, that the main body of the most learned and influential of the heads of houses, professors, and tutors at Oxford were sufficiently well disposed to a union with Rome; that the vast portion of the rural clergy were inclined to glide over in the same direction; that the great majority of the younger clergy, fresh from the university, were over-zealous in the matter, almost requiring restraint; that many of the aristocra-

cy and gentry, educated at the universities, were prepared and wishing for the change; and that, while all minds were thus directed to a great and grand object, one worthy of the thoughts of a whole people—while the mind of England, and England's Church, was forsaking the principles and ideas of centuries, and now turning to tradition and to the fathers—while the whole learning, and feeling, and yearning, and hope of the clergy of the Anglican Church was toward a return to the bosom of their Holy mother the Church of Rome, and sighing for Catholic unity, this high and holy feeling, this onward and noble feeling, was marred and turned aside by the littleness of the Bishop of Exeter. That bishop, he stated, had raised a question about black gowns and white surplices—a question of such paltry insignificance and contemptible littleness—and by evoking a host of enemies, and raising a hurricane of opposition, turned all minds from the right direction, from the grand subject, from the great object of true religion, and the right Church, and unity, and tradition, and all that was truly precious, and likely to effect a glorious work, and turned all minds to such anile trifling as a dispute about gowns and surplices. He had promised much, and no doubt intended much; but by his littleness, and by his energy and talent in turning little things into great things, he had strengthened the hands of his opponents, and utterly marred for a time the very work in which he had himself been one of the most active and useful laborers. A noble work was thus provokingly marred by the imprudence and indiscretion of one of its partisans, and no language

was too strong to apply to him. He dealt sharply, too, with the Bishop of London.

All this, and much more of the same nature, fell from my reverend friend respecting the Bishop of Exeter. He showed considerable heat, which seemed to me to argue that the Jesuits at Rome were much annoyed and disappointed at seeing the turn that things were taking in England. It was not for me to undertake any defense of either the Bishop of Exeter or the Bishop of London.

My friend soon turned to Mr. Newman and Dr. Pusey, and stated that he felt they were doing a glorious work in impregnating the mind of the students of the university, and especially the young clergy, with Catholic principles. It was a subject of unmixed thankfulness that such doctrines should be so openly avowed and taught in the very university of the Anglican Church, after three centuries of suppression and silence; and it was impossible that the movement—the impetus which it gave to the progress of Catholic truth, could fail to end in the final triumph of the Church of Rome. It might be checked or turned aside for a short time, but must soon return to its main channel, and move on irresistibly to its great destiny. It was impossible that Mr. Newman, Dr. Pusey, Mr. Ward, and other leaders could remain where they were. They had gone so far that they must necessarily go further, and when they entered the Church of Rome they would be followed by the greater part of the Anglican Church. They could not honestly remain as they were.*

* At the time of this conversation, Mr. Ward and Mr. Newman had not openly joined the Church of Rome.

I said that I quite felt with him that these persons could not honestly remain in the Church of England; and that they were bound, holding the principles which they professed, to join the Church of Rome; that if I myself held their principles, I should do so; but that many persons felt a difficulty in justifying themselves to their own consciences in leaving the Church of their own accord, without being compelled to do so by the authorities of the Church; and it was possible some of these persons might be influenced to remain from this feeling.

He said that such a feeling was very excusable where there was not a decided difference of opinion and principle on essentials; but there was a line somewhere. As long as they kept within that line, they might indeed remain; but when once they had gone beyond it—when once they renounced or abandoned the essential principles of one Church, and adopted the essential principles of the other, then to remain was not consistent, not honest, and this was the case of these persons. He said they had passed the line, and he should be greatly disappointed if any of them remained as they were. It would not be honest, or becoming the honesty of Christian men, to remain in the Church of England.

I gave my full assent to this, adding that I was sure he would not be disappointed, and that all these gentlemen would ultimately join the Church of Rome.

He then panegyrized in very glowing terms the conduct and talent of Mr. Ward, and spoke in the most triumphant tone of the approaching fall of the Church of England; that it was an event for which God was

to be thanked, especially as it seemed to be His doing —as being a movement which sprung up spontaneously in the heart of the Anglican Church herself. It did not originate with Rome, though of course she watched it anxiously, and assisted it to the utmost of her power; and, he added, smiling expressively, she has power, and we shall soon see England with us again.

I said, in return, that they would be wise to let England alone, and in no way to intermeddle with her State or her Church. It might possibly lead to England intermeddling with Rome.

He asked me what I meant.

I replied, that the people of England did not like to be interfered with, and might be disposed to resent it. I then said boldly to him that I was fully aware that a large portion of the people of the Roman states were anxious to separate the ecclesiastical authority of the pope from the civil sovereignty; that they desired to leave the pope as the spiritual head of the Catholic Church, but, as far as I could learn their sentiments, they were desirous to divest him of his temporal sovereignty; that they had expressed themselves in very many instances, speaking freely to me as a stranger and as an Englishman loving free institutions, as anxious that the pope should be reduced simply to the state of a Christian bishop, ruling the Church as such, but by no means ruling the state as a temporal sovereign; that this feeling seemed to me so general, that all that was required was that some bold man should lift the standard of revolution, and that the people would follow.

He smiled, and asked how this, supposing it to be

true, could affect the question as concerning the Anglican Church.

I answered, that if Rome interfered too much with the Church in England, perhaps England might interfere a little with the Church at Rome; that there was a powerful sentiment, an enthusiastic feeling for Protestantism, and an unhesitating hatred of Romanism, among a large portion of the people of England; and if these persons were once roused, they might evoke public feeling, subscribe large funds, influence the government, and encourage those Italians, and especially those Romans who desired to raise the standard of revolution at Rome, and thus separate the temporal from the spiritual power of the pope. It were wise, therefore, not to intermeddle too much with the Church of England.

This elicited a display of irritation and anger for which I was scarcely prepared. I felt, however, that I was speaking on good authority, as the feeling to which I referred was general among some of the most respectable of the citizens of Rome; that it was shared by some of the most influential persons, and by a very large portion of the tradesmen; that they all spoke with especial dislike and hatred of the order of Jesuits, saying that, as sure as any Jesuit was permitted to enter any house, there was as surely destined to follow in his wake a series of family disputes, so as that there could be no peace in any family into which they were admitted; that, in consequence of this, there was a growing feeling at Rome against not only the order of Jesuits, but against the monks of every other order; that this feeling was extending itself rapidly against

all ecclesiastical government, and especially against ecclesiastics holding government appointments, and conducting the temporal and civil affairs of the state; that the whole body of the laity, excluded as they were from all important, influential, and lucrative offices, were dissatisfied with such exclusion, and were predisposed to any revolution which, by excluding ecclesiastics, and confining them to spiritual matters, might lay open all the civil offices of the state to the fair and honorable ambition of the laity. Feeling all this, and knowing that my reverend friend must be well aware of it, I could not be much surprised that he felt angered or irritated at the use which I made of it, namely, as a warning to him and his friends among the Jesuits not to interfere too much in the affairs of the Church or State of England.

I felt that a change in the subject of our conversation was desirable, as there was neither information nor profit to be derived from the political aspect of Rome, nor from the opinions entertained at Rome respecting the state of the Church of England; and therefore, when he said, in a tone of triumph, that the Church of England must soon fall utterly to ruin and pass away forever, or unite herself to the Church of Rome, I was glad of the opportunity it afforded for changing the subject of conversation. It led to some statements among the most remarkable I had yet heard.

In arguing for the Church of Rome and against the Church of England, he stated that Providence was every day setting the seal of testimony to the former and withholding it from the latter. He said that this was peculiarly visible in the department of missions;

for that, while the missionary labors of the Church of England, notwithstanding the commanding influence and wealth of England, were without any success that deserved the name, the preaching of the missionaries of the Church of Rome had met with the most wonderful successes; that the multitudes of heathen who were converted of late years were beyond expression; and that, from every quarter of the globe, the information received was of the same happy and triumphant character. The great God of Christianity was manifesting his advocacy of His own cause by giving the most ample success to the missionary labors of His own Church; and this, he continued, was an evidence and proof of His favor and love to the Church of Rome, which elevated her above the Church of England, and was so abundant that ere long the whole heathen world must bow to the truth and embrace the Church of Rome.

I replied that I had not much faith in the statements sometimes put forth on the subject of missions. I mentioned the narrative of a friend of my own, who was witness to the conversion of a whole tribe of American Indians. He told me the whole tribe marched down to a river, and that the Roman Catholic priest, without a word of instruction, sprinkled water on every one in the usual form; and that he then hung a little cross by a string around the neck of each, and telling them they were now Christians, he left them. My friend told me that the Indians departed precisely as they came—heard no preaching—received no instruction—exhibited no sign of Christianity—made no profession of any faith, and departed precisely as they

came, as naked, as savage, as wild, and as ignorant and heathen, with this only difference, that each had a little cross suspended around his neck! I added that I fully believed the statement of my informant, who would not deceive me, and that I did not see how the Church of Rome could triumph much in such alleged conversions.

His answer to this was very striking, as showing a degree of credulity which I could never have anticipated.

He said that I was altogether mistaken in doubting the reality of these conversions; that it was in this that the interposition of God was so clearly manifested; that those conversions partook very much of the miraculous in their nature—at least, could not be accounted for, often, unless on the principle of a divine miracle. It was the great and good God setting his seal to the work of his own Church. These very Indians, heathen and savage as they had been, were real converts, and the proofs of the reality of their conversion are undoubted and convincing; so much so, that after the missionary had left them—after he had remained absent from them for two years—after they had been left without further instruction of any kind beyond the memory of his teaching—after he returned to his missionary station at the close of these two years, and was again among these very Indians, he, of course, as was his duty, required of them to come to confession—to confess their sins that they might receive absolution; he was agreeably surprised, and indeed overjoyed, to find that not one of them had any sins to confess! My friend went on to explain that

there was no *matter* for the sacrament of penance, as during these two years the Indians lived such converted lives, such holy and Christian lives, *that there was not one among them who had committed a single sin, and therefore had no sin to confess*, and the missionary priest was unable to confer absolution, inasmuch as there was no *matter* for the sacrament!

I could not but be surprised at such a statement, and wondered in my own mind whether my reverend friend himself believed it; and yet there was all the look and stamp of earnestness and truthfulness in the man. He seemed to believe it fully, and therefore, as unwilling to wound his feelings, I merely suggested that the Indians having no sin to confess might have arisen from their not knowing their sins—from their not knowing that those customs, vices, immoralities, cruelties, and idolatries which they were constantly committing were really sins; in short, they were so ignorant of Christian truth, and so left without religious instruction, that they were unconscious of sin, and therefore confessed no sin. I said that I could not otherwise understand his statement, because the best, and wisest, and holiest of Christians that ever lived were conscious of sin; and that, if those Indians were really converted, they must have been conscious of sin; and to suppose them otherwise must imply that they were wholly unconverted.

This suggestion he rejected and flung from him at once; and he eagerly added, that the very missionary was now at Rome; that he had just returned from America, and was at the Collegio Romano, where he had himself heard him narrate the facts; and as a

proof beyond question of the reality of the conversions and the holiness of the Indians, he mentioned what he called a most wonderful miracle that had occurred when the missionary was administering the holy communion to them. He was holding the host in his fingers thus (my friend suiting the action to the word); and as the poor Indian was too far from him, the missionary priest could not place the host in his mouth; the poor, humble, devout Indian knelt so far away that the priest could not reach him, and—here my reverend friend lifted his hands in an attitude of awe, looked devoutly to heaven, and then earnestly and solemnly addressed me—the host flew out of his fingers, flew over to the poor Indian, and flew into his mouth! "Oh!" he added, in a tone of the most reverential devotion, "the blessed Lord Jesus so loved that poor savage, that he longed to enter into his heart, and thus miraculously flew into his mouth! How anxious he was to get into him!"

I could no longer doubt the sincerity of this priest. There was a fervor, an earnestness, a devotion of manner that showed he fully believed what he thus narrated; and the personal character of the man was such that I had no right to doubt him after so solemn a statement. He narrated it as a miracle wrought by God in behalf of the Church of Rome. He mentioned it as illustrating the blessing of God upon the missions of that Church. He, believing that the age of miracles is not yet passed, but that miracles are still constantly working, imagined that his narrative would be credited by me. But it only proved to my mind that the missionary priest had wickedly invent-

ed the story to exalt and magnify his own labors, and was now telling it among his brother Jesuits of the Collegio Romano, that such of them as were simple, and credulous, and superstitious enough to believe it, might spread it through the world as a new testimony of God to the Church of Rome. My reverend friend evidently believed it, and expected that I should believe it.

I shall never forget this portion of our conversation. It was a practical confutation of those—and I must confess I was myself once among the number—who suppose that the Romish priests are all infidels; that the simple, and superstitious, and ignorant may perhaps believe what they are taught, but that the talented and educated are infidel as to some of the doctrines which they inculcate. I am fully persuaded that, while this may be true of some, it is not true of many whose acquaintance I was enabled to make during my residence at Rome. They were educated, learned, astute, and talented men, and yet they believed things contrary to all experience, reason, and revelation. The reverend Jesuit, who made to me the communication respecting these Indians, was one of the most polished and educated men at Rome. He was conversant with the entire range of European literature. He spoke English, German, and French with almost the same facility as his native Italian, and was as learned and astute as a man might be expected to be who was selected for a professorship in the principal educational establishment of the order of Jesuits at Rome. He fully believed, and expected me to believe, his narrative. This certainly is a

phase of mind not very intelligible in England; but when it is considered that these men are brought up from childhood in certain principles—that they are taught to believe implicitly every thing which the Church is said to teach—that they never see the Holy Scriptures, which might call in question the principles which they are thus taught—that believing miracles are still as constantly wrought as in the days of the apostles—that looking on every doubt in the mind as a horrid infidelity to be hated and loathed, as the source of every woe here and hereafter—that being thus habituated to receive implicitly every thing that seems to come in conformity with the Church, their minds are in a different train, and act on a different principle altogether, and they must not be judged by the same rules as might hold among us, whose minds are so differently constituted and trained. I am fully convinced that in supposing all these men—however it may be with some—to be secretly infidels, we do them the greatest injustice. I am satisfied that multitudes among them believe, with the fullest and most implicit faith, the dogmas of their Church; and therefore, instead of regarding them as the hypocrites and monsters of deception and wickedness which such a supposition implies, I regard them as melancholy evidences of the fall of human nature, and sad monuments of the shipwreck of the human judgment, evidencing to the world that no reach of human intellect, and no grasp of mental genius, and no range of this world's learning, can bring the true and saving knowledge of God to the mind or heart of man. The record may be a saddening one, but it is true: "The world by wisdom knew not God."

It was impossible my reverend friend could fail to observe my incredulity, both as to the sinless state of the Indian converts and as to the wonderful miracle of the consecrated wafer or host. I could not believe them, and I felt I ought not to leave him under the possible impression that I did believe them. I expressed my feeling in the most kindly and courteous terms, being very unwilling to give unnecessary pain or offense; but I let him clearly understand that I had read and heard enough of the missions to hold a very decided opinion as to the argument often drawn from them. I added that I believed the real difference between the missionary results of the two churches was this, that the Church of Rome was generally satisfied with an outward conformity, or, rather, an outward profession, however little the practice might be, looking forward to the opportunities which such conformity or profession secured in reference to the rising generation, while, on the other hand, the Church of England almost universally required the manifestation of a converted mind and regenerated nature, disregarding in a measure all the worldly considerations of expediency or value of external profession. I added yet further, that, under such circumstances, I was prepared to expect even greater appearance of success under the system of Rome, but, on the other hand, far more of reality and spiritual life under the system of England.

After a little further conversation on the subject of missions, and the success said to be attendant upon them—after he had made some allusions to the success of the Jesuits in China, to which I replied by re-

ferring to the bull of Pope Ganganelli, condemning the compliances of the Jesuits in that empire—after this, my friend still urged that the Church of England was inclining to her ruin, and that I should be obliged ere long to leave her, and that, after all, I should be necessitated to join the Church of Rome.

I said that I was fully convinced in my soul that a church which, like that of England, honored the word of God, the Holy Scriptures, so as to make them the sole rule of faith in things necessary to salvation, and which held so much precious truth, would never be abandoned by God. He had blessed her hitherto to the salvation of millions, and I had no fears for her permanence; but, at all events, I had not seen any reason to suppose I could join myself to the Church of Rome. She had too frequently erred in things of the greatest importance.

He replied that God promised to be forever with his Church; that his Church was founded on St. Peter; that that church was the Catholic or Roman Church; that by the promise of Christ it was infallible; and that I should find it impossible to prove her to have failed in any particular. He went on upon this subject at some length, in a way very usual among the advocates of the Roman Church, and asked me to prove that she had erred in any thing.

I answered that as he would probably defend as a truth any thing I should object as an error, that I did not see clearly how I could convince him, unless, indeed, I could prove an absolute contradiction of one doctrine to another. I said this with the view of leading to this very subject.

He said that that would be an objection worth hearing, and seemed to challenge me to the proof.

Fully expecting this, I replied by saying that I believed there were some very decided and positive contradictions in the system of doctrines received by the Church of Rome; and if it were not drawing too much on his patience, I would endeavor to specify an instance, and perhaps he might be able to remove the apparent inconsistency by explanation. But, I added, while such inconsistencies or contradictions remained unexplained, it was impossible to recognize the infallibility of his Church; and though I had presented the difficulty to many eminent men for solution, I had never been so fortunate as to find even an attempt at explanation.

I then called his attention to the fact that the sacrifice of the mass is called "an *unbloody* sacrifice;" that when Protestants object that if the sacrifice of the mass be indeed identical with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, then this daily sacrificing of Christ must be a source of daily suffering to Christ; for, as the Apostle Paul says, "He was not to offer himself often, for then he must have suffered often since the foundation of the world"—when Protestants object that if the sacrifice of the mass be often offered, according to the system of the Church of Rome, then the sufferings of Christ must be often repeated, according to the words of the apostle—when Protestants object this, it is always answered that there are no sufferings, because there is only "an *unbloody* sacrifice," and that in the sacrifice of the mass Christ is offered only in "an *unbloody* manner." It is therefore ex-

pressly stated in the canons of the Council of Trent that the mass is an "*unbloody* sacrifice," and all the catechisms of the Church of Rome distinctly assert that it is "an *unbloody* offering," and all endeavor to obviate the objection of Protestants by saying that Christ is offered in the mass in "an *unbloody* manner."

He assented to this, stating that such was the doctrine of the mass; that Christ was offered as a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead in the mass, and that there could be no pain or suffering to him, though truly, literally, substantially present in the host as the victim, because he was offered in "an *unbloody* manner." It was "an *unbloody* sacrifice," and therefore it gave no pain like that on Calvary; and he asked me where there was any contradiction or inconsistency.

I replied that I had only stated one half my subject. The other half remained to be told, which was this: that the dogma of transubstantiation, as defined by the Council of Trent, and held universally in the Church of Rome, taught that the bread and wine of the communion were truly, literally, substantially changed, so as that their whole substance was changed into the substance of "the body, and *blood*, and soul, and divinity" of Jesus Christ. According to this doctrine, the substance of wine is annihilated, and the substance of *blood* substituted in its stead, so as that all is no longer wine, but *blood*, truly, literally, substantially *blood*. In the offering, therefore, of this there is *blood*, a *bloody* offering, and in the sacrifice of this there is blood, a *bloody* sacrifice; and there is no point of doctrine in the whole system of the Church

of Rome on which she usually makes so determined a stand as this assertion, that after the words of consecration the elements become flesh and *blood*, and thus the inconsistency or contradiction to which I refer is this: her teaching in one moment that in the mass the sacrifice is an *unbloody* one, and in the next moment that it is transubstantiated into *blood;* so that in one doctrine all is *blood*, and in the other all is *unbloody!*

My friend made no attempt at concealing that he had never observed this before, but he was silent, as if revolving it in his mind. He continued so long without replying that I asked him whether he clearly understood me, and saw the point which I urged. He said fairly that he saw it; that it charged the Church with using the argument both ways and in opposite directions, asserting that there was blood, or teaching that there was no blood, just as suited her purpose. He added very honestly, after a long time for consideration, that he had never heard the difficulty before; that it struck him as very curious; that he did not see just then how to answer it; but that he would make it his business to consult a certain lecturer then in their college, and also their professor, to whom such questions belonged; and that, after consulting them, he would communicate to me their opinions.

[When next I had the pleasure of meeting him, it was at the Collegio Romano, where we walked and talked a long time together; but though he stated he had consulted the parties referred to, I was unable to get any intelligible explanation of the inconsistency which I had urged, nor, indeed, have I ever heard it explained by any one to whom I have objected it.]

On reverting to our original point, namely, his statement that the Anglican Church was hastening to her fall, and that I should be necessitated to embrace the Church of Rome, a variety of topics were touched on, and among them the doctrine of the immaculate conception. On this he expressed himself as believing that the Virgin Mary, the Prophet Jeremiah, and John the Baptist had all been born without original sin.

My wife remarked that she could not believe this, for that the Virgin Mary recognized Christ as her Savior, which implied herself a sinner; that the writings of the Prophet Jeremiah were full of acknowledgments of sin; that the Baptist certainly was without all claim to so peculiar an exemption; and she was opening the Bible to show the places to which she referred.

He said that the doctrine was founded on the words of Scripture; that there could be no question as to the immaculate conception of the most Holy Virgin, and therefore her freedom from original sin; and that, in reference to Jeremiah and the Baptist, it was expressly stated that they were "sanctified from the womb," implying that in their original conception in the womb they were immaculate, and as such exempt from original sin.

I could not forbear smiling at such a frail foundation for such a doctrine, and reminded him that the word "sanctified," as ordinarily used in Holy Scripture, meant being *separated to a holy use*, being set apart from all profane or secular uses, and appropriated or separated to the holy purposes of God, and

that this was the case of the Baptist. From the time of his leaving the womb of his mother, that is, from the time of his birth, it pleased God to set him apart, and separate him for the holy purpose of being the Herald or Forerunner of the Messiah.

He replied at once that this was a proof, if proof were wanting, that we could never settle our differences by referring to the Holy Scriptures, inasmuch as we could never agree as to their interpretation. He would not, therefore, refer to them, but would ask whether it was possible to doubt the miraculous and immaculate conception of the most Holy Mary, or that she was perfectly sinless—free from all original and actual sin alike. On perceiving that we dissented altogether on this point, he continued to say that there could be no doubt that she possessed merit —that she was meritorious in the sight of God. On still perceiving that we dissented from such an opinion, he continued to say that he did not see how any one could deny that there was merit in works, and that assuredly there was merit in the sufferings undergone by the blessed Mary in giving birth to the child Jesus. There was no necessity whatever—no reason whatever why she should have subjected herself to them, and therefore her having actually undergone such sufferings was meritorious. It must have possessed merit in the sight of God. She had some claim upon God for it. There are many things, he added, which the Church calls counsels, not commands, and the difference respecting these is, that you are under obligation or necessity to perform commands—you must obey them, or you sin against God;

but you are under no sort of obligation or necessity to perform counsels. They are, as it were, an advice for increased usefulness or increased holiness over and beyond what is necessary for salvation; and if a man perform these, he has merit in the sight of God because he has performed them, and thus has made himself more useful and holy than necessary. There was, for example, no kind of necessity upon the young man in the Gospel, obliging him to give all he possessed to the poor, but there was counsel, advice; and he was not bound to take that advice, even though given by our Lord himself; but if he had followed that advice, then undoubtedly he would have had merit with God.

My wife replied to all this with expressions of surprise that any one could hold the doctrine of human merit; that if we but knew our own hearts, we could not but feel ourselves such poor unworthy creatures, such poor miserable sinners, that it seemed impossible to arrive at such a height of presumption as to imagine we could have merit in the sight of God. We never do—we never can do enough for the God who has done so much for us; and how, she asked, how is it possible for us to do more than enough? Even after we have done our very utmost—our all, we yet are unworthy sinners; and therefore our Lord has expressly said, "After ye have done all, say, We are all unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."

He said that the Church taught that there was a merit in some works; that those works were not natural works, but done by the grace of God, and that

God was pleased of his own grace to ascribe merit to them. It was in this way the saints had merit with God. They had by God's grace been enabled to live very holy lives, and to endure many sufferings, and to perform many good works. They had been enabled to do all this only by God's grace, and as all this was not necessary to their own salvation, but was supplemental or supernumerary, so all this was meritorious, and thus gave them an accumulation of merit with God. But still there was nothing presumptuous in this, as it was from first to last of God's grace.

I said here that I was anxious to understand him clearly: I understood him as saying that although the merit of works was only a merit ascribed to them of the grace of God, and not truly and rightfully belonging to them, yet that the merit was as effectual as if it truly and rightfully belonged to them; so that a man having performed some such work might fairly reckon on it and take account of merit for it, and set it down against his sins—against the punishment his sins deserved. I added that I inferred that this was his view from what he had just said of the merits of the saints, implying, as I thought, that by such works of merit a man might obtain or work out for himself more merit than he wanted for his forgiveness and salvation; in short, a man could be more righteous, holy, and meritorious than God required of him.

He assented to this.

I then asked whether I was so to understand him as implying that a man might, by following the counsels of the Church of which he spoke, obtain a large

accession of merit, and then set this down, so to speak —if I might speak it with reverence—in a sort of account with God, as if keeping a debtor and creditor account with God; and thus, by increasing the sum of his meritorious actions, so far lessen the balance of sin that was against him, and thus lessen the amount of suffering or punishment for his sins.

He smiled, and said that, though it seemed an unusual way of stating the point, yet the truth was very much as I stated it; that this merit went to lessen, not the sins as I had said, but the temporary sufferings and temporary punishment due to his sins. He added that the truth was, that the Church taught more than this, namely, that as a man could work out for himself more merit than was required for his own salvation—that as a man could thus accumulate merit, superfluous and supererogatory, it formed or went to form a sort of treasury of superabundant merits in the Church.

I replied that I had so understood the doctrine of the Church of Rome; that I had lately procured a small volume, just published by the order of Jesuits, setting forth all "the pious works" to which certain specified indulgences are attached, and that in this volume it is expressly stated that the superabundant merits of individuals—the merits which they have possessed over and beyond what was required for their own salvation, formed a sort of *treasury of merit* in the Church, and that the pope, as the head of the Church, had the disposal of all this superfluous merit, and could apply it to persons here or in purgatory, as it might seem good to him; that thus he could lessen

the period of suffering in the fires of purgatory by what was called *a partial indulgence*, and annihilate the whole by what was called *a plenary indulgence*. I added that this was a doctrine too evident in every thing that was to be seen in Rome, and that all my views of the truth of Holy Scripture—all my opinions of God's revealed word—all my feelings as to my own poor sinful soul, that ought to be humbled to the dust, revolted against such notions. The doctrine of human merit seemed to me unbecoming and unnatural, irreconcilable with human experience, and contrary to the plainest language of Holy Scripture; but, bad and unseemly as it was in itself, it seemed to me hideous and monstrous when carried to the outrageous extravagance of constituting a treasury of superfluous merits for the pope or any poor mortal to distribute or apportion to others in the way of indulgences to release them from purgatory.

He said that he was not surprised at our repugnance to it, and that he could not expect that we should receive it at first; but that, after some more instruction, we should feel the difficulty pass away in this as in many other particulars.

My wife said that nothing could reconcile us to this. It always was and always must be a fatal objection to the Church of Rome with all earnest and sincere Christians. She could never forget that it was this very point, carried out in the matter of indulgences, that first led Martin Luther to the work of the Reformation; and she added that day after day it was forced upon her memory at Rome, for whenever she looked on that noble Church of St. Peter's, she could

never fail to remember the means by which much of it was erected; that a large amount of the money to defray the cost of its erection was raised by the sale of indulgences; so that, in her memory and imagination, the Reformation of Luther was always connected with the erection of St. Peter's—the unscriptural doctrines of human merit and of papal indulgences.

I was unwilling that this subject should pass away hastily, as if it were not a matter of the first and last importance, and therefore I remarked, with the view of leading further into the subject involving so much of the essence of the Gospel, that Martin Luther felt very strongly on the point of human merit, and that he held that a man could never be justified by works, and could only be justified by faith in Christ. He held that the doctrine of justification was the question by which a standing and a falling church were to be distinguished.

He replied, with great vehemence, that Luther was a bad man—an immoral man, inasmuch as his writings led to immorality, and his life was horribly immoral; that he held that no actions were good; that there were no good works; that it was no matter whether a man did good or evil; in short, it was perfectly astounding the wickedness which he taught; and yet, he added, Luther was a great man—a man of wonderful talent and power, and he stopped at nothing. He was a great man, but he was an awful one. He showed in his writings that his opinion was against all good works; that there were no good works; and that, even if there were, they were useless. The

zeal and vehemence of my friend against Luther led him to say more and to express himself more strongly and warmly than is necessary to repeat here.

I said that I apprehended that Luther was much misrepresented, and, indeed, that the doctrine of the Gospel and of the Anglican Church was much misunderstood on the subject of faith on one hand, and works on the other. I then narrated an interesting incident of a Roman Catholic priest, who once called on me in private to lay open the state of his mind. We had long and deeply interesting conversations on many points, but there remained what he regarded as a fatal objection to the Church of England and all Protestant churches. They all, as he said, flung good works aside, and taught that men could be saved without them; and he felt that no man could be saved unless he lived a holy life unto God. The reply which I made to him was, that he was evidently under a mistake; that all Protestant churches, and especially the Church of England, held the necessity of holiness or good works, but in a different way and for a different end from what he imagined. The truth of the Holy Scriptures, I said, was this: There is the Son of God, and there is the Holy Ghost, both the second and third persons of the Trinity; both the one and the other of these has his own peculiar or special department in the economy of a man's salvation. The work or office of the Son, Jesus Christ, is to justify us, that is, to take away our sins, and make us accepted through his merits in the sight of God. This is called our justification, and it is ours solely through faith in Jesus Christ, without any works or deserving on our

part. It is wholly through faith and without works. But this, I said, was the office or department of Jesus Christ. There was then the office and department of the Holy Spirit. He was to take in hand those who were justified by faith, and He was to make them holy—holy in thought, holy in feeling, holy in desire, holy in aspirations, and holy in their whole lives, leading them, and teaching them, and enabling them to live in prayer, and humility, and good works, and all that partook of the example of Jesus Christ. And thus, I continued, we hold that our justification, which is the office of the Son of God, is solely by faith and without works, while we hold that our sanctification, which is the work of the Holy Ghost, is manifested in every good word and work. Now Protestants hold both one and the other of these, but we do not like to confound them. We hold that the justification by Jesus Christ is necessary, and we also hold that the sanctification by the Holy Spirit is also necessary; the former being through faith, the latter being a consequence, and never a cause of the former; and therefore it ought never be said of our Protestant churches that we reject the practice of good works. We put both faith and works in ther proper and relative places, and we do not like to confound them, and we shrink from supposing that there is merit in either one or the other. I added that this view of the question completely satisfied the Roman Catholic priest, and shortly afterward he renounced the Church of Rome, and is now a minister of the Church of England.

My reverend friend listened to this very attentively, and stated that he quite understood it, but he

wished to know why we denied merit to the good and holy works of the justified man.

I answered this with an apology for having already said so much, when I rather wished to be informed by hearing his opinions; but that, if he could bear a little with me, I would endeavor to make some excuse for our Protestant views on this subject. I then said that we held that poor, and infirm, and sinful creatures, such as we are, can do no good thing, that is, nothing good in the searching eye of a holy God, unless as His Holy Spirit gives us His grace. It is not we, but the Holy Spirit, that does the good work in us. If we have a good thought—if we have a holy wish—if we have a heavenly desire—if we have done a good thing, it has been the Holy Spirit who has planted it in us or enabled us to do it. Whatever holy thought we think and whatever good work we are enabled to perform, the praise and merit belong, not to us, but to the Holy Spirit, who has done it in us. The merit is His, and not ours, and it is a wrong and injury to Him for us to claim it as if it were ours. The great truth, I said, was this: our good and holy works, so far from making us creditors with God, as if we had a claim on him on account of our merits, do really bring us in more and more debtors to God. The more holy thoughts we have, and the more good works we do, even so the more are we made debtors unto God the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration we were enabled to think the one or do the other. It has been some new and additional afflatus of the Holy Spirit, and it therefore makes us debtors more than ever. This, I added, was the view I took of this subject, feeling that

our hearts were poor, weak, miserable things, and that, when rightly conscious of our real state, as our fallen hearts appear before God, the very last thought that can be congenial to the mind is that which could have connection with human merit.

I can not say that my reverend friend was much affected by this mode of stating the subject. He heard it, however, with marked attention and respect. It seemed to commend itself to his better feelings, and I could only pray that the time might come when circumstances might bring such views home to his convictions and his heart.

He merely said that there was what the Church called *the humility of merit*, and that the sentiments I had uttered were of that nature. He then turned away to some opinions of St. Augustine and St. Bernard, and on these we conversed for a short time, and soon afterward he retired with his companion.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Origin of the Catacombs—The Christians using them as a Refuge —As a Place of Worship—As a Burial-place—Forgotten and afterward discovered—Resorted to for Relics—A Visit to them—Description of their present State—Means or Tests for the Discovery of Relics—Collection of monumental Inscriptions found in the Catacombs —Their Character and Nature—A Conversation in the College of the Jesuits respecting them—Conclusion as to the Religion of the Primitive Church.

During a visit to the Collegio Romano, a conversation arose in reference to the Catacombs, and the argument to be derived from their inscriptions. Some remarks respecting the Catacombs will be necessary to render the conversation intelligible.

The origin of the Catacombs was in the days of pagan Rome, and long previous to the preaching of Christianity. They seem now universally regarded as the mines or quarries from which the inhabitants of Rome extracted those vast supplies of that kind of earth or sand called puzzolana, so generally used in their buildings. Quarrying in the Campagna for this, they carried their shafts sometimes to a considerable depth, and on striking on a vein, they followed its windings, sometimes upward, sometimes downward, now by long flights of steps, and then by winding galleries. The branches from the main shafts or galleries extend in every direction, frequently so winding as to intersect each other, debouching by a great variety of openings on the Campagna. These passages are narrow, ranging generally from three to six

feet in width, and from seven to ten in height. They are very rude, and rough, and rugged, presenting in themselves, apart from the associations which give them so deep an interest, nothing whatever beyond the shafts, galleries, or passages of any mine. They are cold, damp, and dark, and constitute a sort of gigantic honeycomb-work, extending for miles in different directions under ground; and many a time the wanderer of the Campagna—the desolate Campagna—comes suddenly upon some deep hole—some dark hollow, which, if explored, will be found to be one of the innumerable entrances to these quarries, or at least one of those spots where the superincumbent soil has sunk in, and perhaps closed some branch of the Catacombs forever. Indeed, this sudden falling in of the earth after heavy rains, severe frosts, and occasional tremblings of an earthquake, has been a source of much danger. Tales are carefully narrated of scenes too horrible to describe here, of those who heedlessly and without competent guides have entered these subterranean regions. The earth falling in has crushed or smothered some, while it has debarred forever all exit for others, who have been left there to perish miserably. They who thus sought the Catacombs as the grave-place of others, found them only a grave for themselves.

These quarries or mines of puzzolana had long ceased to be worked by the Romans. They seem to have been exhausted; at all events, they had been long closed as mines before those events of Christian history which were destined to shroud the Catacombs with an ineffaceable interest and charm.

It is unnecessary to notice the persecutions of the primitive Church. The everlasting hatred—the frantic fury—the deep malignancy—the atrocious cruelty, so truly representing man as half beast and half fiend, that so characterized these several persecutions, are matters of history now familiar to all classes of Christians. They are alluded to here only as the causes which first operated in investing the Catacombs with their special and peculiar interest. It was in these Catacombs the Christians concealed themselves from the horrors of their persecutors. Some Christians, feeling themselves called on to stand as witnesses for the truth, gave their testimony with faithfulness and fearlessness, and willingly and rejoicingly sealed their testimony with their blood. They received the martyr's grave and the martyr's crown. Others seem to have sought their martyrdom—to have rushed madly to the tribunals, accused themselves, and sought the crown of martyrdom as they might seek the robe of marriage. It is not necessary either to justify or impugn the motives of these persons, who seem to have freely sought persecution rather than to have been sought by it. But the immense body of the faithful, feeling no such special vocation to martyrdom—feeling confident that they would be enabled to stand faithful if called on in the hour of need—rather fled before their enemies, and sought to retire from view, and hide themselves till the storm were overpast. They fled in vast numbers, and concealed themselves in the Catacombs. As the profession of Christianity became a capital offense, it became necessary for all to fly for their lives—to fly

from home, kindred, property, all, and conceal themselves until some change in the law or some mitigation in the persecution might give them some hope of escape. In the mean time, family after family, as well as individual after individual, fled from the city of Rome into the Campagna; and there, entering the holes and shafts of the Catacombs, concealed themselves in the dark recesses, and winding passages, and gloomy labyrinths of those exhausted and neglected mines. We read of some of the saints of the Old Testament, that "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." And these had their followers in the saints of the New Testament. They gathered in crowds into these dark caverns. They flitted among them like spectres, startling and frightening each other, as meeting suddenly in these graves of the living; now shrinking in terror as from an approaching enemy, and now meeting with joyous thankfulness some faithful friend. There must have been a powerful band of brotherhood created by scenes like these, by a consciousness of common dangers and mutual dependence, and by the fact that they all were the sufferers for the same high and holy cause; and they were knit together by the strongest ties of Christian brotherhood, and they lived together encouraging and comforting one another by that with which they themselves were comforted of God, by the enduring, ennobling hope of eternal life.

This conversion of the Catacombs into places of ref-

uge, and concealment for the miserable and persecuted Christians, led to their consecration to a yet higher and holier purpose. It led naturally to their becoming the place for Christian worship. It has been ever found in the experience of Christianity, that affliction and sorrow draw the heart from the things of this present world; and that times like those to which we are now referring—times when no man could call his life his own, draw men powerfully to their knees, and lead to a more frequent, more earnest, more fervent attendance and devotion to the worship of God. Such times lead true and faithful men not only to more devotion in private for personal comfort and strength, but also to more worship in public for mutual encouragement and support. Accordingly, amid the deep afflictions and fearful sufferings of these victims of persecution, they assembled together for the worship of God. They there knelt, and prayed, and praised, and read together; and those long passages and dreary caverns resounded with the words of prayer, and with the hymn of praise, and with the reading of the word, and with the preaching of the Gospel, as these faithful and devout men, the children of persecuted Christianity, and living martyrs to the faith of Jesus, poured out their souls in prayer and praise. There they excavated little recesses and called them churches, where they could assemble in larger numbers for the common worship of God and the communion of the Lord's Supper; and there many a hardened heart was melted into love, and many a broken spirit was healed by the balm of Gilead, and many an afflicted soul was comforted of God. There must have been

an inexpressible charm in the words of Holy Scripture under such touching circumstances, and there must have been a marvelous power in the Gospel preached faithfully in such strange scenes and stranger times. Nor was this all. Even when persecution relaxed in violence, and Christians were not necessarily exposed to death for their profession; and when, therefore, they were enabled to steal forth from these dark caves, and return to home and relatives, still there was no relaxation of violence against any thing approaching to a public celebration of Christian worship. It was necessary, therefore, to conduct it with the strictest secrecy—a secrecy so strict as to be unknown to all but those whose faithfulness could be entirely depended on; and it was thence invested intentionally with a veil of mystery, so as to insure its being kept secret from the uninitiated. This secrecy became the more necessary, when discovery would have been the certain martyrdom of the most zealous and devoted of the ministry of the Church. All this led to the worship of the Christians being secretly and mysteriously celebrated in the Catacombs; and those Christians who, living in the upper world, breathing the air and enjoying the light of heaven, yet loved to join in the common service and in the holy communion, were obliged to resort in the silent hours of night to those holes in the Campagna which led through many a long and winding intricacy to the secret recesses where they could enjoy the ministrations of the Church.

And further still, these dark and dreary scenes were destined to receive a yet further source of interest.

The Christians who fled there and found safety there were not unmindful of their brethren who in the upper world were called to the trials of martyrdom; who, not escaping as others, or perhaps arrested in the moment of escaping, were doomed to the sword, or to the scaffold, or to the wild beasts of the Colosseum. They used to steal from their hiding-places by night, and bear away the mangled bodies and scattered bones of these martyred men, and, bringing them among their brethren, thank God for the faithfulness of their testimony, pray to God to be enabled to follow the example of patience and faith, and then bury them in the recesses of the Catacombs. The Catacombs thus became the graves of the martyrs. Too soon and too often, alas! they became the scenes of martyrdom. On some occasions, when the fury of persecution raged with more than ordinary malignancy, the persecutors would enter the Catacombs and slay the unhappy Christians even in their hiding-places; and though, in the intricacy of these deep recesses, the unhappy ones were able easily to stop passages and remain only in those places where none but those well acquainted with the place could possibly trace them, yet at times they were treacherously betrayed and surprised, so as that the Catacombs became not only the graves of martyrs, but the scenes of martyrdom; and besides this, the Christians usually buried their dead in these places. The pagan Romans, at least of the higher and wealthier classes, usually burned their dead, and deposited the ashes in small cinerary urns or vessels. The Christian Romans, on the other hand, seem invariably to have adopted the prac-

tice of burying their dead, perhaps from the Jewish custom, or from the prevalent opinion that the end of the world was at hand, and that their bodies would soon arise again for immortality. At all events, whatever was the motive, the practice was universal. They made no burial-places above ground, but taking the relics of the dead into the recesses of the Catacombs, where so many of the slaves and poorer classes of the heathens were buried, they there deposited their brethren. They cut a cavity in the side wall, so to speak, of the passage or gallery, sufficiently large to contain the body, and there they laid it. This system continued for years, even for centuries; and as the numbers of Christians multiplied at Rome, so the number of burials multiplied in proportion, till all through the Catacombs, the walls of the passages and galleries at both sides are full of these graves, arranged sometimes two and three deep, so that the stranger now walking through the Catacombs is walking through long galleries of the dead, sleeping on either hand in numbers beyond counting. There lie buried the mangled forms of the most faithful of martyrs—men who counted not their lives dear to themselves; there lie buried the bones of many an afflicted and persecuted saint, who lived and died in the hope of glory; there rest the mortal remains of many a faithful Christian, whose life adorned the Gospel he professed, and commended it to the admiration of all men; and there lie the moldering bodies of ten thousand times ten thousand of those men who have professed the name of Christian, but whose hearts are known only to Him who shall reveal all secrets at the judgment day.

Such is the interest associated with the Catacombs. It is purely the interest of association, as in themselves they possess nothing of attraction even to the curious; but associated as they are with the persecutions of the primitive Church, consecrated by being the place where the sacred services were celebrated, and hallowed as the resting-place of so many Christians, they possess an enduring charm to the Christian.

And yet it seems strange that they should have been so long neglected and forgotten. It is certain that soon after Christianity had triumphed over paganism, and had become the established religion of the empire, the Catacombs ceased to be resorted to as the sacred and cherished burial-place of the Christian dead. They were closed. From being unused they soon became neglected, and from being neglected they soon became forgotten. It is a remarkable fact, that for many centuries the memory of the Catacombs was forgotten, and even their existence totally unknown. For ages all tradition of their uses—their sacredness—their moldering contents—and even of their very existence, was utterly lost. In the city of Rome, with all its crowding memories, this was lost. In the Church of Rome, with all its supposed congeniality with antiquity—with all its boasted veneration and devotion to the ancient—with all its priests and its monks, its convents and its monasteries—in the Church of Rome, all memory of the Catacombs as the refuge of the persecuted Christian—as the place of the services of the persecuted Church—as the burial-place of the martyrs and the saints of Christ, was as thoroughly lost, and as perfectly a forgotten and neg-

lected thing as in the mosques of Mecca. It was not till the sixteenth century that the evidence of their existence and their uses called attention to them, and the interest and importance of the subject were forced upon the lazy and slumbering inmates of the innumerable convents of Rome.

And even then they were destined to be desecrated by a use that could scarcely have been anticipated. They were invaded by innumerable bands of monks and friars, collecting from their graves the bones of the long-buried dead—disturbing the moldering relics of mortality—dragging them into the upper world—hawking them from city to city, and from country to country, and driving an execrable traffic in them under the name of relics. Every grave was rifled, every skeleton was rent asunder, every bone was pounded in order to multiply splinters; and when once the grave of some martyr or saint was said to be discovered, the head was severed and sent to one country, and the leg was severed and sent to another, an arm was forwarded to one land and a thigh to another, a tooth was extracted from the skull and sent to some convent, and a rib severed from the back sent to some monastery. And, at the same time, a traffic of the most disgraceful and degrading nature was driven in all these, as lawful articles of ecclesiastical merchandise. The demand for such articles was so great in the superstition and ignorance of the times, and the miraculous properties of such relics were so extravagantly extolled, as of incalculable advantage to the temporal and spiritual interest of the possessors, that the demand of the market soon called forth an ade-

quate supply; and such was the unscrupulousness of the authorities at Rome, and so utterly profligate the monks who were the merchants in this matter, that they not unfrequently sold several different skulls as the only true skull of some particular martyr, and several different arms as the veritable arms of some favorite saint, so that even at the present day some saints have several different heads and arms in different places. Sometimes the traveler in Italy discovers some martyr who has had two or three heads, and some saint who has had four or five arms, and perhaps a still greater superfluity of legs. The enormous amount of wealth which this traffic brought into Rome is incalculable. The Catacombs, as a mine of bones, proved incomparably more precious than if they had been a mine of silver.

But disgusting and sickening as was all this as an indecency and an outrage upon the dead, and revolting as it was to every gentle and Christian feeling, it yet could not alter the facts of past history, nor strip the Catacombs of their touching interest and real importance to the student of Christian history. There the Catacombs remained, there the graves of the Christians remained, there the monuments of the dead remained; and while these remained, it might be hoped that they would supply some evidences—some items of primitive customs and primitive opinions, that might serve to illustrate the opinions and the practices of primitive Christianity.

The best mode of visiting these scenes, at least those Catacombs most generally, because most easily, visited and explored, is by entering them through the

Church of the Convent of St. Sebastian. It is narrated in the legend of that saint that he was a young and handsome soldier; that for the crime of believing in Christianity he was bound to a tree as a target for the arrows of his comrades; that having been shot through every limb till he bristled with arrows, a human porcupine, he yet survived by a miracle; that he again accused himself before the tribunals, and was dispatched by decapitation. This, or something of this kind, is the legend of St. Sebastian, one of the most favored and popular of the saints at Rome; not so much from any thing extraordinary in the saint himself, as from his being so useful and fine a subject for the pencils of the artists. The fine and youthful figure—the fleshiness and nakedness—the grace of the position, and the expression of the face, all supply a noble subject for the artist; and the multiplication of the pictures creates a multiplication of votaries. It is said by the monks of the Convent of St. Sebastian that their church or chapel is built over that part of the Catacomb where the body of the saint was buried. This is by no means improbable; at all events, there is an entrance—and it is by far the best and most convenient—into the Catacombs through the church of the convent.

The monk who acted as guide or cicerone on our visit to these interesting scenes was selected for his office with admirable judgment and as admirable taste. He looked like a moving plague—a personification of the malaria—a walking pestilence. There he was, an attenuated thing, a living skeleton, with his brown cloak around him to conceal the bones from

view; you might fancy you could almost see the light of the candles shining through his ribs; and, withal, he looked a meek and subdued man, one who spoke with vivacity—indeed, with enthusiasm, though his voice was toned with a sad and melancholy cadence. He was very calm, thoughtful, and silent if left to himself, but exceedingly animated and communicative when questioned. He spoke in raptures of the subterranean chapel, and gave all real and needful information, as well as a good deal that was unreal, respecting the Catacombs, that the general visitor could require. He supplied each of our party with a lighted candle. He led the way himself with steps slow and solemn, and as stealthy as if he feared to disturb the slumbers of the dead. On he moved, or rather glided, through those dark passages and damp galleries, looking for all the world like a ghost; and, but for the color of his brown monkish dress, with his thin, haggard, attenuated look, and, at the same time, his earnest and impressive manner, he might well have passed for one of the ancient inhabitants of the Catacombs called again to life. He would stop at times, and carefully explain all the details of some grave more remarkable than the rest, and at other times he would pause, hold his candle in one hand, and mysteriously point with his other bony hand to some spot or object—look unutterably mysterious, and then drop his eyes to the ground, and pass on without another word. And then, when all was over, he looked so poor and sad—so miserable and meek, and stood so modestly looking for the gratuity usually given on those occasions, with an expression that

seemed designed to move the visitor to more than ordinary liberality, that there really was no resisting the incomparable acting of his silent begging. 'Poor man! he earns hardly the money he receives.

The graves of the Catacombs are excavated on both sides of these passages. They are excavated in the soil or tufo which forms the sides of the passages, and therefore can be examined with the greatest possible facility. They are often smaller—much smaller than might be expected; indeed, so very small sometimes as to raise the question as to the manner in which the bodies of the dead could have found room in them.

That these graves, at least for the greater portion, were the graves of Christians, is very generally believed. The grounds of that belief are not so certain as might be desirable. It was certainly the custom of the pagan Romans to *burn* their dead. But this was true generally, and not universally, for it was customary to bury the slaves and the poorer classes; and there is not a shadow of doubt as to the Catacombs having been frequently used as the burial-place of those classes of the heathen population long before their being made the refuge of the persecuted Christians. And, besides this, there is every probability that the Christians often buried the bodies of their heathen relatives among those of other Christian members of the same family. The bones of many who had continued in heathenism were laid in affectionate remembrance beside those of others, near and loved, who had embraced Christianity; and thus heathen and Christian sleep side by side, in the last and common resting-place of humanity.

This fact has been placed beyond a shadow of doubt by the number of monumental inscriptions, which are certainly heathen, found in the Catacombs. Nor is it a sufficient answer to this to suggest that possibly they may have taken the monumental tablets of heathens, and employed them to cover the graves of Christians, as this would only prove that there were the tombs of heathens close at hand; indeed, this seems very certain, for some stones have heathen inscriptions on one side, and Christian inscriptions on the other, showing that they had taken a heathen stone, and, reversing it, placed it on a Christian grave, and then wrote a suitable inscription.

It was almost universal among the pagan Romans to place over the monumental inscription the words "*Divis manibus*," which they sometimes contracted to the first two letters, "D. M.," the allusion being to the gods presiding over the place of the dead. This and other allusions to their gods occur frequently on the monumental tablets of the Catacombs, thus demonstrating the fact of the burial of heathens in those places.

The non-observance of this has led to some ludicrous mistakes—even to the enrolling some heathens in the roll of saints, and the worship of the bones of heathens as the relics of saints. The following is a well-known instance of this:

D. M.

Julia Evodia, filia fecit castæ matri.

This is a heathen inscription. The tablet is dedicated to the manes, "Divis manibus," and is similar to thousands of others found on the graves and urns

of heathens. It is a memento which Julia Evodia, a daughter, raised to her mother; and, without ever considering that the lady was a heathen, the monks have disposed of her bones as the relics of a saint and martyr; and never observing that it was the grave of the mother, whose name is not given, they have christened the bones by the name of the daughter, as the relics of Saint Julia Evodia, who had erected the tablet!

This is a well-known and amusing instance of the mistakes into which either their ignorance or their avarice seduced the clergy of Rome in former days. They now, indeed, exhibit some ingenuity in suggesting that the D. M. of the heathen monuments may possibly have been adopted among some Christians to express Deo Maximo or perhaps Divus Martyr, and thus endeavor to Christianize all those monuments of the heathens found in the Catacombs! The enlightened and candid among them laugh at the whole affair as much as ourselves; and this they can do the more easily, as all that could have been gained by the mistakes or deceptions of the old monks has long since been accomplished.

On asking our emaciated and ghastly guide for the signs by which he could ascertain the grave of a Christian from that of a heathen, he replied by pointing to little crosses scratched on the wall beside or above the graves. He pronounced these to be the signs of the Christian faith of the departed dead. This seemed reasonable; but it occurred at the moment that, as these Catacombs were in the possession of these monks for some centuries, so they could scratch

these crosses over any number of graves that might seem desirable. It was clear they could never be detected, and the character of monks has never been such as to secure them from all suspicion of "pious frauds." This appeared still more probable, when, having lingered a little behind our party in order to examine some grave more accurately, I observed a gentleman occupying himself the mean time in making these crosses with the iron end of his walking stick! We agreed that there was no appearance of difference between these and the other crosses, and so our young friend amused himself with making a few more; and when we left the Catacombs, he congratulated himself on having made half a dozen saints or Christians at least during his visit!

I was particularly anxious to learn the means by which the monks were able to ascertain the bones of a saint—the bones of a martyr—from the bones of any ordinary Christian. As the Catacombs were the great treasure-house of relics, I wished to learn the tests or signs by which those bones which were to be venerated as relics of saints were to be discerned from the bones of others. While residing far away in the distant scenes of England, a man is compelled to rest satisfied with what information he can gather from books on such subjects, and there is scarcely a strong statement can be made by one party that is not immediately contradicted by the other, so that the mind of an inquirer is held in suspense, amid the hardihood of assertion generated by the *odium theologicum*, by that compound of the gall and vinegar of Calvary. But I have sometimes thought that there would be a

satisfaction in making the inquiry and receiving the answer on the spot. I resolved, therefore, to ask the question, amid the dark vaults and dreary graves of the Catacombs, and to obtain my answer amid the fleshless skeletons and long-silent bones of the primitive Christians.

The poor attenuated skeleton of a monk, who seemed to me as pious as he was poor, and as sincere as he was attenuated, stated that one sign was a red mark, which was sometimes observed beside a grave. This, he said, was the blood of the martyr, which was thus sprinkled on this spot, in order to remain as a sign of martyrdom. Another sign was a small bottle, which was found at many graves, but not at all. This bottle was found to contain some deposit of a reddish hue, which it has been inferred was blood—the blood of the person there buried, and who therefore must have died the death of a martyr. It at once suggested itself that it was an easy matter for the monks to multiply the number of their images, whenever they were in need of a new supply of relics for the market, as they had only to place a red mark upon any grave, or deposit one of these little bottles of terra cotta beside it. I felt that at least I could have no great dependence on them, even supposing the signs were real and not fictitious; for there is no authority—no ground whatever—not the shadow of authority or ground for supposing that either the red spot or the bottle are signs of martyrdom or saintship, any more than of that Christianity which holds salvation by the blood of the cross. If they are signs of any thing particular, they seem rather the sign of men who died de-

pending on the blood of Christ, and whose surviving friends gave to their graves that sign of their faith. The truth is, no dependence whatever can be placed on these signs; and I afterward found that they were laughed at by the more learned clergy of Rome.

Our interesting but most credulous guide seemed fully to believe what he was stating; and when I inquired as to the signs or tests of a saint—the means by which the bones of a saint—not a martyr, but a saint—might be discerned from those of ordinary Christians, he replied with the most perfect simplicity, that when they were first discovered they emitted a sweet odor—a delicious fragrance, that ravished the senses; and as this certainly was not the ordinary property of dead men's bones, it seemed to argue—if true—something most marvelous and saintly. But this was not all. When these bones were brought forth into the upper world, they wrought the most wonderful miracles: the sick were healed, the dead were raised, the heretics were converted at the touch or sight of these bones, thus demonstrated to be the relics of some saint. There is one instance on record. It was the case of a skull—a fleshless, eyeless, tongueless, noseless skull. It was questioned, after certain exorcisms, as to the rightful owner, and it answered its name, its residence, and told the circumstances under which its owner was decapitated, dying a martyr's death! What other persons may think of such marvelous doings—such exquisite perfumes from bones, and such interesting colloquies from skulls—it is not for me to say or determine. The poor monk who guided us through these dreary Catacombs seemed

religiously to believe them, and he was not singular in doing so. The enlightened portion of the ecclesiastical body, however, are quite as unbelieving as Protestants on these particulars.

It was not possible that a source of evidence, so calculated to illustrate and prove the character of primitive Christianity as the inscriptions in the Catacombs, should fail to attract universal attention. It was fortunate for me that I had paid much close attention to the great mass of such inscriptions, collected from the Catacombs, and deposited with admirable arrangement in the Vatican, as otherwise I should have been taken by surprise, and have been wholly unable to deal with the arguments of my friends the Jesuits, derived from those inscriptions. I was one day in the Collegio Romano, in company with the librarian, the professor of Antiquities or Archæology, the professor of Dogmatic Theology, and the professor of Canon Law, and some others of the priesthood. These learned, and courteous, and agreeable persons were members of the order of Jesuits, and were an ornament to any society with which they were connected; and they were not likely, when showing to me some tablets taken from the Catacombs, and selected on account of their inscriptions, and deposited in the Collegio Romano, to omit the fair opportunity which they offered of impressing me with the value of those inscriptions as evidences of the ancient faith and practice of the Church of Rome.

I stated frankly that I had spent some time in the Catacombs, and that I had no great faith in the conclusions which some of my kind friends of Rome habitually deduced from them.

They asked me what were the conclusions to which I referred, and why I should doubt what seemed so evident to them.

I replied, that "the Congregation of Relics" once came to a decision as to the relics found in the Catacombs; that that decision was to the effect that the appearance of a palm branch graven on a tombstone, and the appearance of a vessel tinged with blood, were to be received as sure and certain signs of a martyr's grave. Such was their decision. But, since that decision was recorded, much more has been brought to light, which has proved the erroneous character of that conclusion of the congregation. For example: some of those vessels, supposed thus to have been vessels of martyr's blood, have been found, on careful examination, to be of a form and make long subsequent to the age of persecution, and to exhibit signs painted or graven upon them which could not have been so graven or painted till after the times of martyrdom, inasmuch as they were not invented till years long subsequent. And again, in reference to the palm branch, it has been clearly ascertained that the graving of a sprig or branch, which they call a palm, is frequently found on the graves of those who were undoubted heathens; and also on the graves of infants too young for martyrdom; and also on graves of a period subsequent to the age of martyrdom. The decision, therefore, of the congregation of relics, has been altogether rejected of late years, even among all the learned of the Roman Church. It is altogether rejected even by yourselves. I added, that the decision of the congregation was well enough for the few

items of knowledge then in their possession; but, inasmuch as their confident decision is now universally exploded, it had shaken all confidence on my part in the peremptory statements so frequently made at Rome in reference to the inscriptions found in the Catacombs. I felt constrained to examine and judge for myself.

I perceived that this remark on my part had its effect—the effect which I desired—in lowering the tone of confident assertion and bold statement which my friends had been exhibiting while we were looking over the library. They at once stated, however, that they were not referring to the decisions of the congregation of relics respecting the graves of martyrs as distinct from the graves of other saints, but to the inscriptions and figures graven upon the tablets as indicative of the fact that certain religious practices, against which Protestants objected in the Church of Rome, and which were made a ground of protestation and separation, were religious practices prevalent among those who were the saints and martyrs of the primitive Church. On my asking to what religious practice they especially alluded, one of my friends replied by referring to the practice of invocation of saints—praying to the saints; adding that there was no doubt as to the existence of the practice, as it was evidenced in the inscriptions.

I asked to what inscription and what words he alluded, as I had observed nothing of the kind.

He replied by boldly stating that some of the tablets were inscribed with the "*orate pro nobis*," or, rather, correcting himself, "*ora pro nobis*."

I said that I had seen nothing of the kind; that I had carefully examined the great collection of inscribed tablets deposited in the Vatican; that some of them—indeed, the larger portion—had no evidence or trace of Christianity beyond a cross, or some anagram or emblem of Christ, as the ship or the fish, or the Greek letter X, or the A and Ω, or some other of the various symbols of the Christian faith; that some commenced with the solitary word "Pax;" some concluded with the words "*in pace*" or "*in Christo*," implying that the person either lived or died in peace or in Christ—in the peace of God or in the faith of Christ; that I had observed many inscriptions stating that the person lived in peace, "*vixit in pace*," and only one *vivas in pace*, expressive of the sigh or wish of the survivor that the person might live in peace, and very few others of the same import; and that, in the large variety of inscriptions which I had had an opportunity of examining, I had never seen or heard of more than one with either *ora* or *orate pro nobis*.

My friend replied that there was no doubt of the fact that there were such inscriptions, and that they actually possessed one in the college, and that he had seen the inscription, so that there could be no question as to the prevalence of the practice of saying the *orate pro nobis*—praying to the saints to pray for us.

I reminded him that there were collected about two thousand inscriptions; that these were taken chiefly from the monumental tablets of the Catacombs; that they were cited as the representatives of the opinions of the primitive Christians; and that all he was enabled to say was, that among these two thousand he

had seen *one* with this inscription! I then added, that, considering the heathens of Rome prayed to their departed heroes, it was no more than natural that some few of these, on embracing Christianity, more in profession than in reality, might ignorantly continue the practice, and pray to some departed saint; and that such an exception could prove nothing in favor of the practice; that so isolated an instance as one inscription could only serve, like an exception, to prove the rule, and the real wonder was that more could not be found; and the fact that more were not found among the thousands collected, proved powerfully that it was not the practice of the primitive Christians to inscribe the *ora pro nobis* on their tombs. The inference was, that they did not pray to the saints.

He answered this by saying that I must at least acknowledge that the inscription implied that the saints in heaven prayed for us; that after they died they did not lose their holy sympathies for us, nor their love of prayer for those whom they loved in life, and whom they left behind them in this vale of tears; and that, if they thus prayed for us, it could not be wrong for us to ask their prayers, now that they are in heaven, as we had often asked them while they were yet upon earth.

I replied that even his own interpretation of the inscription implied rather that the saints in heaven prayed *for* the saints on earth—that they prayed for us—and that I felt that there was a wide difference between our supposing that they prayed *for us* and our praying *to them.* I believed that it was a very early opinion among Christians that the departed Christians or saints were in the presence of God, and

prayed to God for them; but I felt this was widely different from our praying *to them*—offering those prayers *to them* which should be offered only *to God.*

He expressed himself greatly pleased at my acknowledgment of such opinions as being prevalent very early in the Church, and he spoke as if he thought there was little or no difference between *their praying for us* and *our praying to them*, and then went on to say that there was a marked distinction to be observed in the inscriptions on the monuments of the Catacombs. One class, he stated, contained such expressions as *requiescat in pace*—may he rest in peace—may he be refreshed, may he be comforted: all this class are the monuments of Christian persons generally, and these inscriptions are prayers for the dead. The other class are the monuments of martyrs, who pass at once into the beatific vision of God, and who therefore do not need those prayers for their peace, refreshment, or comfort. Therefore those prayers are omitted; and this was the real cause of there being so many monuments without prayers. It was because there were so many martyrs.

I said that I could not assent to his ideas of either class; that the fact of there being no prayers *for* the dead or *to* the dead inscribed on the monuments, was to me an evidence that the Christians of those days neither prayed for the dead nor to the dead, and that this was a much easier way of accounting for the omission than supposing that all these were the monuments of martyrs, a supposition for which, as far as I could judge, there was not the faintest foundation. And as for the statement that the words *requiescat in pace*,

and such similar expressions, were inscribed on the tablets, I could only say I had never seen such among all I had examined, that is, among all the collection in the Vatican, a collection larger than all other collections in the world combined. Such an instance might be there; I heard there was, but I saw nothing like it; on one tablet, indeed, I had seen the natural and loving ejaculation *vivas in pace*, may you have peace! and this appeared to me no more than a wish expressed to the dead rather than a prayer addressed to God. I added that I could only speak of what I had myself seen. It was possible he might have had larger and better opportunities of informing himself, and that he had probably examined them more closely; but that I apprehended there might be some mistake on his part, and I would therefore feel obliged by his showing me some inscription of the kind.

The reply to this was, conducting me to several tablets, and pointing to one on which was rudely engraved or scratched the figure of a man in a kneeling posture.

My friend, pointing to this, and observing that I was silent and could make nothing of it, said that there was a kind of monumental language well known and understood; that it was derived from a comparison of a large number of inscriptions; that when a tablet was found without a prayer for the dead, it was to be regarded as the tablet of a martyr; and that, as martyrs go at once into the vision of God, they do not need any prayers, and therefore no prayers are inscribed on their tablets; that, instead of such prayers, there was some emblem, as a representation of a

person standing in the attitude of prayer, or as the figure of a kneeling man, that is, the figure of a man praying *to* the martyred dead, and thus imbodying, not indeed the words, but the idea of the *ora pro nobis*. He said that this was a matter very well known and understood by those who were acquainted with the language of the monumental inscriptions.

I could not but smile at this statement. I had seen so many of these monuments without any thing that could imply a prayer for the dead, that I had concluded from thence that the primitive Christians did not cherish such a practice as praying for the dead in the age of the Catacombs; but my friend of the order of Jesuits assigned as the reason for so marked an omission, that all such monuments are those of the martyrs, who were in no need of such prayers! Thus variously do different minds look upon the same things.

I remarked, in a doubting tone, that my friend seemed to regard the kneeling or praying figure as the representation, not of the martyr, but of some living friend.

He said that the monumental language demanded this. A martyr could not require prayer, and therefore the figure could not represent the martyr himself; that it must therefore represent some one else, perhaps his friend, or relative, or follower, who erected the tablet, and who engraved his own representation on the tablet, to show himself in the act of praying to the departed and glorified martyr; that this was the well-understood language of such inscriptions, and that I might depend on this interpretation.

I replied that his process of reasoning did not strike me as very logical. He found tablets without prayers for the dead, and at once concluded that they were the monuments of martyrs who needed no prayers; and now he found a figure of a praying man, and at once concluded it could not represent the man buried beneath the monument, but the living man who erected the monument. I understood that the monument was always the monument of the dead; that the inscription was always with reference to the dead; that any picture, or image, or other representation was designed for the dead, and that it was quite new to me to hear of their representing the living. I regarded it as representing the dead, and accordingly, in the monuments of the Catacombs, such figures are always of the same sex as the dead person.

[In a subsequent conversation at my own residence with one of my friends from the Collegio Romano, this subject was renewed, and I was not a little surprised at finding a new and different interpretation given of this figure. It was then argued that the kneeling figure represented the buried dead; that it represented him as kneeling in prayer, and that it thus showed that the saints and martyrs in heaven pray, and that, as they can not pray for themselves, so they must be praying for us. In the Collegio Romano, the figure was said to represent the living; but at my own residence it was said to represent the dead or departed! These inconsistencies are very frequent when arguing with different persons.]

My friend replied that I was quite mistaken in regarding the figure as the representation of the depart-

ed one, for that the known language of inscriptions required it should be the representation of the living Christian who erected the tablet; and it was designed to show his belief in the martyr's enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, and that he was thus praying to the martyr to pray to God for him—asking for the intercession of the martyr—really, an *ora pro nobis;* and it was thus a clear proof or justification of "the Catholic Church" in praying to the departed saints to pray for us.

I answered this by saying that I could not think the figure represented the living Christian who erected the tablet; that such an interpretation was forced and unnatural, for that it was the custom of all ages and of all nations to represent the dead rather than the living on their monuments. I could not but think that the figure was designed to represent the dead, as one who had lived and died a praying man.

He at once caught at my words, and said that if I regarded the figure as representing the departed saint, then I must acknowledge it as evidence that in the primitive Church they thought the departed saints prayed; and that, as they needed not to pray for themselves, they must be praying for us.

I said that I did not regard the figure as representing the departed saint as praying for us in heaven, but as having been a praying man in his life; that as the words "in peace" and "in Christ" implied that the departed had lived or died in the peace of God and in the faith of Christ, so the kneeling posture might imply that he lived or died in prayer. I thought this the natural interpretation of the figure; and I said

that in England, and I believed in other countries, and certainly in the Church of St. Peter at Rome, the monumental statues always represent the departed persons; that it was usual to represent them, not as they were when dead, but as they were when alive—the warrior as a warrior—the orator as an orator—the painter as a painter—the clergyman as a clergyman; and I observed that all the monumental figures of popes and nuns in St. Peter's represented them as popes or nuns—represented them as they were on earth, and not as they are supposed to be in heaven; and that, in the same way, we ought to regard this kneeling figure as representing the departed Christian as he lived or died on earth, a praying man. He was represented kneeling, to show he was a man of prayer—a Christian man. There is an example of it in Scripture, where the conversion of St. Paul is described in the simple words, "Behold, he prayeth!"

There was no direct reply to this, but it was stated that I could not deny that the saints departed prayed for the Christians still on earth; and that it was customary in the primitive Church to pray for the dead.

I said that I believed it was a very early practice in the Church to pray for the dead; that I thought it a very foolish, though perhaps natural practice; that it always seemed to me to be praying when it was too late, like praying for yesterday—for a thing gone by; but that, at all events, praying *for* the dead was a very different thing from praying *to* the dead; that the two seemed very inconsistent, the former being wholly useless as being too late, and the latter idola-

trous, as offering a prayer to a creature which ought only to be offered to the Creator.

It was evident that we were not likely to agree. The truth was, that, surrounded and assailed as I was by four of the reverend professors in their own college, I was not disposed to be as gentle and as cautious as I might otherwise have been. One of the party called on me some days afterward, in company with a lay brother, and we resumed the subject in detail; but there was nothing very important elicited.

As much use is made by the priests at Rome of arguments derived from the Catacombs, a few more words may be added on the subject. Those Catacombs have for centuries been in the possession of the monks of certain convents, and no one is permitted to enter without the attendance of one or more of these; and they are constantly talking of new and wonderful discoveries of inscriptions, and relics, and chapels, which are sure to confound all opponents of the Church of Rome. In truth, they are able to *invent* any discovery that may suit them, and make any arrangements within the Catacombs that may serve their purpose. They have exclusive charge of the Catacombs, and they can not be regarded as overscrupulous in their reported discoveries.

It is not, however, in the Catacombs themselves that an anxious and earnest inquirer can obtain much satisfactory information respecting the practices or opinions of the first Christians. It may be, and undoubtedly is, satisfactory to one's curiosity to witness those dark recesses which were the scenes and theater of some of the most striking events in Christian story.

But all, or almost all, the monuments—the real mementoes of the past, have been removed. The marble slabs that sealed the graves, the tablets with their inscriptions, and all else that was real and certain—all that could be depended on as likely to throw light on the past, have been removed. Some have found their way into private collections, a few have a place in the Capitol, a few more may be seen preserved in the Jesuits' College, while the great mass has been removed to the Vatican, where they form a great collection, great in number, in importance, and in interest. It may indeed take away somewhat of the interest of such monuments, the seeing them, not in their own position beside the graves of the Catacombs; but still, as there is no security against the Catacombs falling in and burying them forever, it was of immense importance that they should be removed to some place of safety, where they may be preserved forever. No place could be more suitably selected than their present position in the Vatican.

In the long gallery, called, I believe, *la galleria lapidaria*, by which the series of galleries of sculpture are approached, there are said to be deposited and exhibited for examination four thousand monuments or works of antiquity. Of these there is a very considerable portion connected with Christian antiquity. Inserted in the wall on one side are a vast number of monuments, tablets, inscriptions, being memorials of the heathen dead. In the wall, on the other hand, are inserted a similar series of analogous monuments, inscriptions, and tablets, the memorials of the Christian dead. The inquirer thus possesses at a glance all he

requires for a comparison of the practices and opinions of both heathens and Christians on these occasions. There is but little difference between them beyond that of the heathens beginning with the words "*Divis Manibus*," and those of the Christian ending with the words "*in pace*." Nor, indeed, ought much to be expected. The ties of near relationship are the same, whether among heathens or among Christians. The natural love of husband and wife—the mutual bond of parent and child—the pure affection of brother and sister, are one and the same, whether among heathens or among Christians; and as the griefs are as sad, and the mourning as deep in one as in the other, so the language of affectionate and sorrowing remembrance —the expressions of monumental inscriptions must be expected to be much the same, whether on the tablets of the cinerary urns of heathen Rome, or on the monuments beside the Catacomb graves of Christian Rome.*

Day after day and week after week have I paused in this gallery to examine these monumental inscriptions. It always occurred to me that if a belief in the sufferings of the dead in purgatory—if a belief in the efficacy of the prayers of the living in behalf of the dead—if a belief in the matter of fact of the departed saints praying for the living—if a belief in the efficacy of any praying to or invocation of the departed saints, was held among the Christians of the

* Among the heathen inscriptions is one which struck me as a beautiful memorial from a husband to his wife. It was to the effect that never, during their union, had she done any thing to displease him but *once*, and that was by *dying*.

Church in those early ages, when the Church used to hide herself, used to celebrate her worship, and used to bury her dead in the Catacombs, there ought to be, and there should be, some evidence of such belief in the inscriptions so numerous to be found in the Catacombs. The absence—the total and perfect absence of every thing of the kind, seems to argue powerfully that no such things entered into the religious belief of the Christians of those ages.

There are two things observable in those inscriptions.

The first is, that while some begin with the single word PAX, almost all of them end with the words NPACE OR IN PACE, OR IN CHRISTO, or some cross or other anagram of Christ expressing the same thing. There is seldom any word connected with this. The inscription will generally be found to contain the name of the dead, and the age or number of years he may have lived, as thus: "To Julius, a pious and well-deserving son: he lived XX. years *in peace;*" or "To Evodia: she lived XXX. years *in Christ.*" A careful examination of a large number of these inscriptions gave the impression that the intention was to convey the idea that the person had died "in peace," that is, in the peace of God or "in Christ," that is, in the faith of Christ, and that nothing more or less was intended.

It is observable that in a modern grave-yard in any Roman Catholic country there are always expressions in the monumental inscriptions which intimate the belief of the Church of Rome. There is a request to the passing traveler to offer a prayer for the dead; there is a statement setting forth that it is a good

thing to pray for the dead; there is a prayer that the dead may rest in peace; there is a request for the assisting prayers of the saints. These and others of a similar tendency are found in every cemetery in Roman Catholic countries. But there is nothing like this—nothing that has the faintest resemblance of this, or of any opinion approaching to any of these, to be found among the innumerable inscriptions collected from the Catacombs. The whole collection of inscriptions thus argues unanswerably that those opinions that have been of late years so universally received in the Church of Rome were wholly unknown in the primitive Church.

The other peculiarity in these inscriptions which deserves attention is the system of graving signs or symbols on the tablets. The cross, the ship, the fish, are frequent; and still more that common symbol of the cross, as the Greek X, with the R, as the first two letters of χριστος, combined with the A and Ω, the whole being intended to represent the dead as having died in the faith of Christ, the Alpha and the Omega. The ship, like the ark of Noah, seems to represent the Church; and the dead is thus described as one saved in the Church of God. The fish, Ιχθυς, a word composed of the initial letters of Ιησους Χριστος Θεου νιος Σωτηρ, was a very favorite symbol, and accordingly sometimes appears on the monumental tablets, implying that the dead had died in Christ. The dove is often added as the emblem of peace; and Jonah and the fish, as the emblem of the resurrection. Indeed, in all those inscriptions, whatever form they assume, there is conveyed the one plain and simple

statement, that the person who lay buried beneath the tablet was a Christian; and all these several forms, assumed, perhaps, from the varying tastes of individuals, seem to regard it as enough to describe the dead as having died in the peace of God and in the faith of Christ.

This simplicity of primitive Christianity is a very interesting characteristic of those early ages. Indeed, it is quite refreshing to the spirit, which is so oppressed by all the gairish show and complicated ceremonials of the present times. It is absolutely a relief —a throwing off a burden, to let the mind turn away from a series of difficult and complicated doctrines— from a mass of dogmatical mysteries and scholastical subtleties—from a round of symbolical forms and unintelligible ceremonies, so associated with every phase of religion at Rome, and to let it rest for a while amid the simplicity that characterized the religion of those who were "the destitute, afflicted, tormented" of the Church, and were compelled to hide themselves "in dens and caves of the earth." The men who were faithful amid the fiercest persecutions, who counted it all joy to be able to worship God in the darkness of the Catacombs, and there lived and there died, were content to live in the peace of God and to die in the faith of Christ, and to inscribe on the tombs of those "who resisted unto blood, striving against sin," the simple words IN PACE or IN CHRISTO. It seems to imply that the times are changed, and that we are changed with them when we yearn for more.

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